ADBUSTERS

JOURNAL OF THE MENTAL ENVIRONMENT >> JAN/FEB 01 >> NO. 33

Merry Christmas &
Happy New Year

US/CAN $5.95 UK £3.95 ¥1200

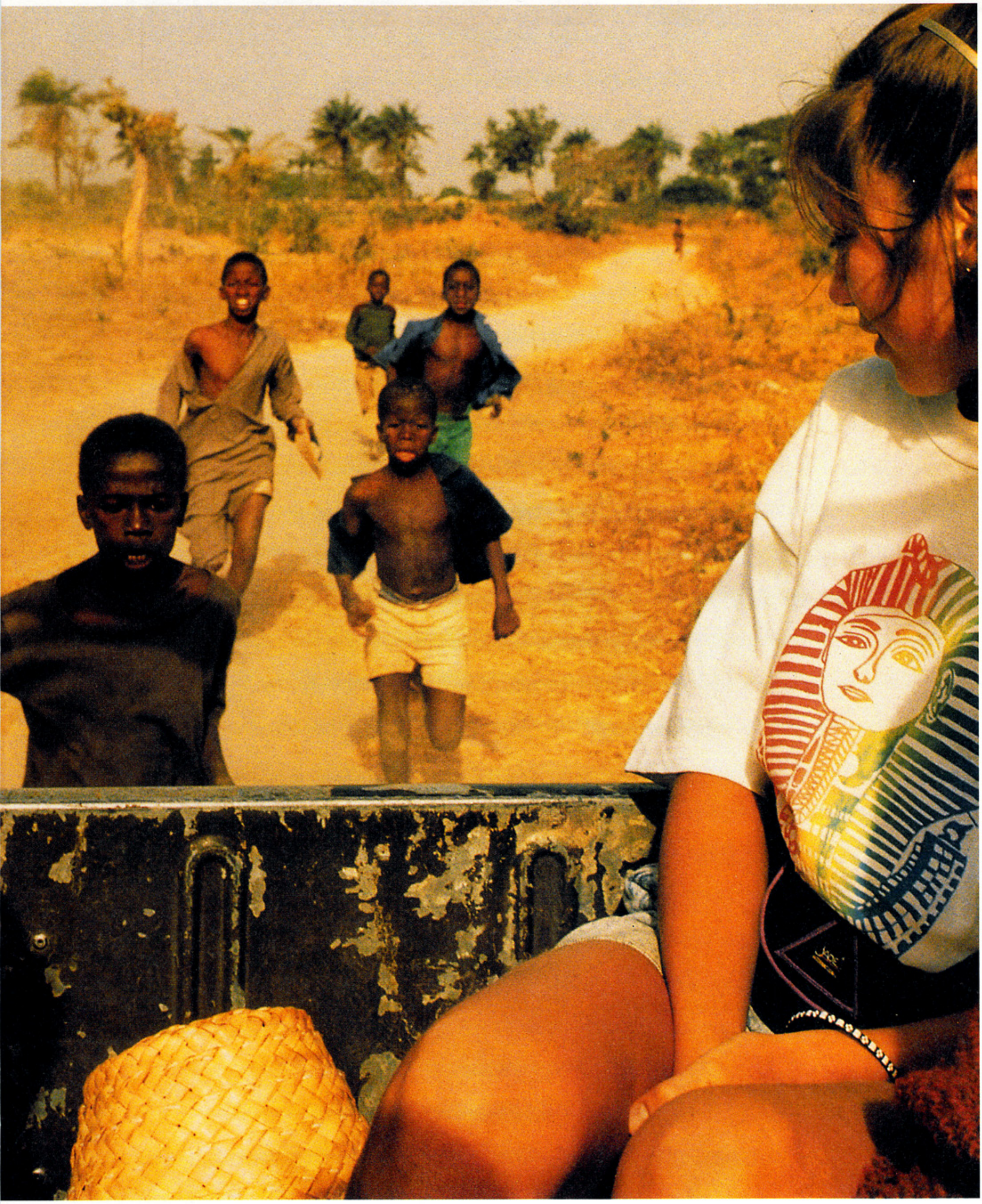
0 55113 79265 6 01

WWW.ADBUSTERS.ORG VOL. 9 NO. 1

NO CONNECTION...

NO CONNECTION...

NO CONNECTION...



It was funny seeing *Adbusters* #31 with the anarchist on the cover: I was wearing the same black shirt, black bandanna and black messenger bag. Then I saw issue #32, with the consumers seeing their own image on the advertisements. It wasn't funny anymore. I think you see the irony.

Josh Jensen, Portland, Oregon

THE EXPERTS

Adbusters magazine has long been caught in what John McKnight would call "deficit thinking." I was disappointed that the bulk of the article on McKnight ["The Experts," *Adbusters* #32] concentrated more on ranting against current structures than highlighting McKnight's strategies for strengthening community. His claim is not that professionals are evil, but that our belief in "experts" has undermined our ability as individuals to engage in meaningful action. It's not a question of our service industries recognizing their inadequacies so much as a matter of us, as individuals, fulfilling our potential.

Jaime Yard
Burnaby, British Columbia

The author of "The Experts" [*Adbusters* #32] states that if the money that governments put into social programs was instead handed out directly to the people, they would leap into higher income brackets. This is a great idea in theory, but it would breed laziness among the impoverished. They would be receiving free money. This would be seen by their children, who would then follow the same path. What is needed are incentives for them to get that money.

Richard Parker
Burlington, Ontario

MEME WARFARE

Powerful memes usually involve food, sex, and danger ["Meme Warfare," *Adbusters* #32]. Really powerful memes combine these elements into meme cocktails (memeplexes). Really, really powerful memes get the people who receive them to also spread them. Your ideas are okay, but where's the food, sex, and danger? Where's the self-propagation? You ain't got a meme if you ain't got that zing! Why don't you tell your readers how to make their own memeplexes by giving them real metamemes. Let's stop fucking around and go for the throats of the corporate death burger purveyors.

Antonio Rice
Springfield, Missouri

We must seek to shut down the kind of meme propagation we have right now, that only reproduces a few fat supermemes such as "obey!" and "consume!" Advertising is a system for controlling, disabling, blocking, short-circuiting and by-passing mental functions. Isn't what we want to do the very opposite of advertising?

Meme warfare is not only a battle between memes on a fixed battleground. Memes live in meme machines, and it is the machines that have to be changed — the environment memes populate.

Felix Holmgren
felix@vegetarians.com

Why slag lawyers by throwing us all into the "them" camp of your list of corporate lackeys? The participation of lawyers in the "overthrow of the meme" is every bit as important as that of artists and "multimedia whiz-kids."

Lawyers in many countries are struggling now to affect change in laws and social conditions which have led to current global inequities in human and economic rights. Many do so without compensation, and at risk to their personal safety and survival.

Diane Rowe
Newfoundland, Canada

I attend high school, and I'm not sure this generation can be changed. Teens want to be rebels, and if they find that *Adbusters* is rebellious, they will turn their fixation from Calvin Klein and MTV towards your magazine. Instead of coming up with ideas of their own, your catchphrases and memes will become trite and trapped in the minds of readers. Is it possible to escape? Or are Americans doomed to spend eternity following the leaders of the times?

Kevin Kirshenbaum
Shenendehowa, New York

CRITICAL MASSES

The front cover of *Adbusters #32* immediately brought to mind an excerpt from Jedediah Purdy's book *For Common Things*:

"What has so exhausted the world for us? For one, we are all exquisitely self-aware . . . Even in solitary encounters with nature, bicycling on a country road or hiking on a mountain path, we reluctant ironists realize that our pleasure in these places has been anticipated by a thousand L.L. Bean catalogues, Ansel Adams calendars, and advertisements promising a portion of the rugged or bucolic life. So we sense an unreal quality in our words and even in our thoughts. They are superficial, they belong to other people and other purposes; they are not ours, and it may be that nothing is properly ours. It is this awareness, and the wish not to rest the weight of our hopes on someone else's stage set, that the ironic attitude expresses."

Rod and Lennie Kat
wildkingdom@aristotle.net

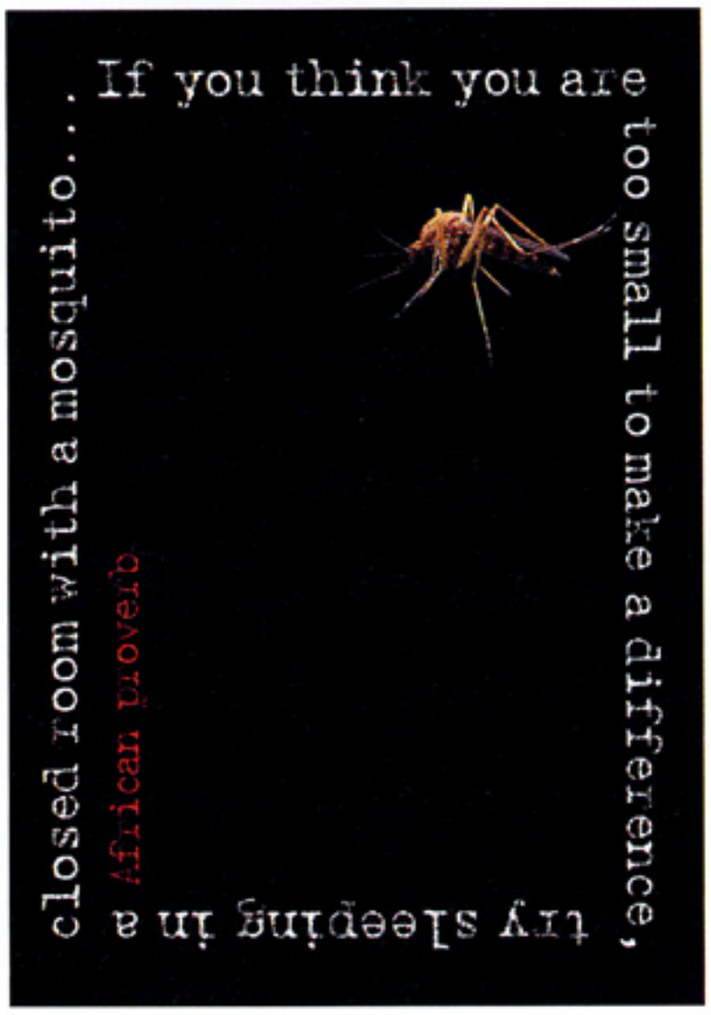
Your reference to Lenin ["All This Talk Of Anarchy," *Adbusters #32*] was incorrect. While he referred to anarchism in his pamphlet *"Left-Wing" Communism, An Infantile Disorder,* he said it was a distinctly different political trend, namely petty-bourgeois revolution.

The main Leninist objection to anarchism is that it promotes, in your words, "a voluntary association of free and equal individuals." Anarchism, however radical its rhetoric, presupposes free trade, while disregarding the inegalitarian effects of free trade. Indeed, if the anarchist motto is "mind your own business," then what separates it from the World Trade Organization's laissez faire attitude?

Barry Stoller
Northampton, Massachusetts

As a Canadian of some awareness (I hope), I am not sure I understand what Kono Matsu means by the statement that I live in "a country that can no longer generate its political agendas from the grassroots up"

CORRECTION: The Green Party gubernatorial candidate for New York is Mark Dunau, not "Grandpa" Al Lewis, as stated in "Not Left or Right," *Adbusters #32.*



As many Zimbabweans feel they are powerless in the face of the demented souls taking us to the brink, I stumbled on this proverb which I would like to share with everyone.

Let's take a page out of the Yugoslavian book and watch civil disobedience pull the rug from under an unwanted despot who (like his counterpart here) tried to claim legitimacy from an unfree and unfair election. As a commentator from the University of Zimbabwe Students Union put it after Suharto stepped down in Indonesia from similar pressure . . .
"If they did it, why can't we do it!"

Chaz Maviyane-Davis
Harare, Zimbabwe

["Canada Gets New Media Mogul," *Adbusters #32*]. As far as the recent spate of corporate mega-mergers goes, Canada is just continuing a global trend that the US started about two decades ago. True, as Matsu suggests, the States may have more "gutsy" and strictly enforced regulatory policies, but as we have seen in the past, vested corporate interests always end up getting their way.

Charles A. Leduc
Vancouver, British Columbia

I am appalled by how much criticism you can get away with when talking about smoking ["War on Public Health," *Adbusters #32*]. Brundtland says, "Everywhere we turn, there is something or someone telling you to smoke." Where does this person live? Everywhere I go, I see anti-smoking ad campaigns clogging the already self-righteous airwaves.

Kellyanne Hanrahan
Brooklyn, New York

I am alarmed to hear that Philip Morris is buying Nabisco ["Why is Big Tobacco Raiding Your Kitchen?" *Adbusters #32*]! I am a Girl Guide and our biggest national fundraiser is the sale of cookies, which are Nabisco products. There is no way I will now sell these cookies and knowingly support a company that is completely opposite to the beliefs of the Girl Guides. Is it too much to ask that we not be forced to feed the mouth of a corporate monster while teaching young girls to be responsible citizens?

Jennifer Braem
Victoria, British Columbia

In "Cubamerica" [*Adbusters #31*], Bruce Grierson writes, "There is always the danger, for tourists, or journalists, of over-romanticizing the poverty and decay of Cuba; but the spirit of the people and the place, the *duende,* is real." I suppose this statement is intended to get him off the hook for what he has done in this article: over-romanticize Cuba.

People manage to be content in all corners of the world, in prison, and under all types of suppressive governments. Let's not lose sight of the fact that many Cubans hate where they live. They don't get on cheap rafts and plunge themselves on a 90-mile journey through the middle of the ocean because everything is fine and dandy.

Phil Anson
Denver, Colorado

LETTERS

Your magazine has begun to bore me. I already know that multinational corporations are destroying the environment and that their manipulative advertisements are destroying our culture's ability to think. Message received!

Why not print some articles critical of our movement? I'm afraid I'm getting too self-righteous in my activism, and I can't afford a subscription to *The Economist*. It's up to you to keep us activists on our toes.

Jeff Wilson
Montreal, Quebec

In response to Thomas G. Hedberg's "Requiem for Earth Day" [*Adbusters* #31], I'd like to add this perspective: no one as yet has died in honor of a brand or corporation or in a war against a brand or corporation. It may not be altogether a bad thing if the McDonald's logo were to supplant the crucifix as the most recognized symbol in the world — it's highly unlikely we'd see a mass "purging" taking place in the name of McDonald's.

Name withheld by request

David Millar of Costa Rica is somewhat unclear on the concept of "sustainability" ["Letters," *Adbusters* #32]. By way of declaring ecopsychology a "confused" ideology, Millar rather sniffily poses the following question: "If . . . there have been thousands of societies that were truly sustainable, then why have they not been sustained?" Because, dear David, of such interfering factors as imperialism, genocide, capitalism, industrialism, corporate greed, consumerism and war, to mention but a few.

Diana Trimble
Oakland, California

MALIGNANT SADNESS

Your suggestion that America has the highest rates of depression [*Adbusters* #30] is not fully warranted. You mention that "China reports 200 times less major depression than America." The key word to observe here is "reports." The question is whether Chinese citizens are in a position to relay the status of their psychological well-being to anyone. The psychological profession, and psychology as a science, are prominently Western phenomena.

Just imagine the effects of famine, starvation, war, ethnic "cleansing," disease and drought on people in nations that lack the infrastructure to assess the psychological well-being of their citizens. Let us not claim that we suffer greater depressive ills than other societies. This form of social egocentricity is precisely what we want to avoid in our attempt to appreciate and understand the experiences of others in societies not our own.

Deryk Hagar
Kingston, Ontario

Every time there's an article on mental illness, why is there no mention of the ancient and revolutionary information that certain foods protect mental health?

In a pilot study by Dr. Andrew Stoll and his colleagues in Boston, nine out of 14 manic-depressives receiving fish-oil capsules (containing oil equivalent to 15 cans of tuna a day) experienced relief from their symptoms. It would help if journalists reported good news like Dr. Stoll's study in their gloom and doom articles.

Lauren Ayers
Sacramento, California

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Call 1-800-663-1243, order online at www.adbusters.org or fill out the subscription insert card.

Babies are a love
That come from above
Some are cute
Some are black
One day they will ask for a Big Mac

Danielle Di Pietro
c/o Poets Post

I enjoyed your articles about the relationship between culture and depression, but it is important that readers know that the strongest influence is being omitted: biopredisposition.

Neglecting to distinguish between individuals who are depressed because they are failing to achieve materialistic objectives from those who are depressed for biological reasons is insensitive and irresponsible. Your articles suggest that we treat the depressed as failures; in this case, consumer dupes. This undermines sympathy for, and treatment of, the ill.

Graeme Kennedy
Vancouver, British Columbia

Some readers are failing to see the obvious: *Adbusters'* attacks on Prozac are not aimed at those who are *truly, clinically* depressed, but those who take the drug to combat a new form of depression — one that results from a society dominated by consumerism, isolation, non-stop TV-watching, net-surfing and 50-hour work weeks. *Adbusters* is challenging people to put down the remote and the Doritos, throw away the Prozac and start following their dreams. Isn't that what life is all about?

Emily Creveling
New Brunswick, New Jersey

CRAPMONGERING

Your contempt for your fellow human beings is so extreme as to border on the sociopathic. What fantastic gall to imagine that the tiny minority of whiners that comprise *Adbusters* are the sole proprietors of the unalloyed TRUTH about . . . well, everything, it would appear!

You self-righteous, self-important wretches! You high-and-mighty crapmongers! What precisely would you suggest we all do? Any helpful suggestions at all? Well, I have one for you: why don't you, instead of wasting whatever talent you possess telling the rest of us what idiots we all are, leave this pit of incorrectness that is the company of your fellow human beings and move to the bush, where your ability to survive outside consumer culture will be quickly determined by forces to which there is no appeal whatsoever.

Michael Hugh Anderson
Vancouver, British Columbia

PO-MO BLUES

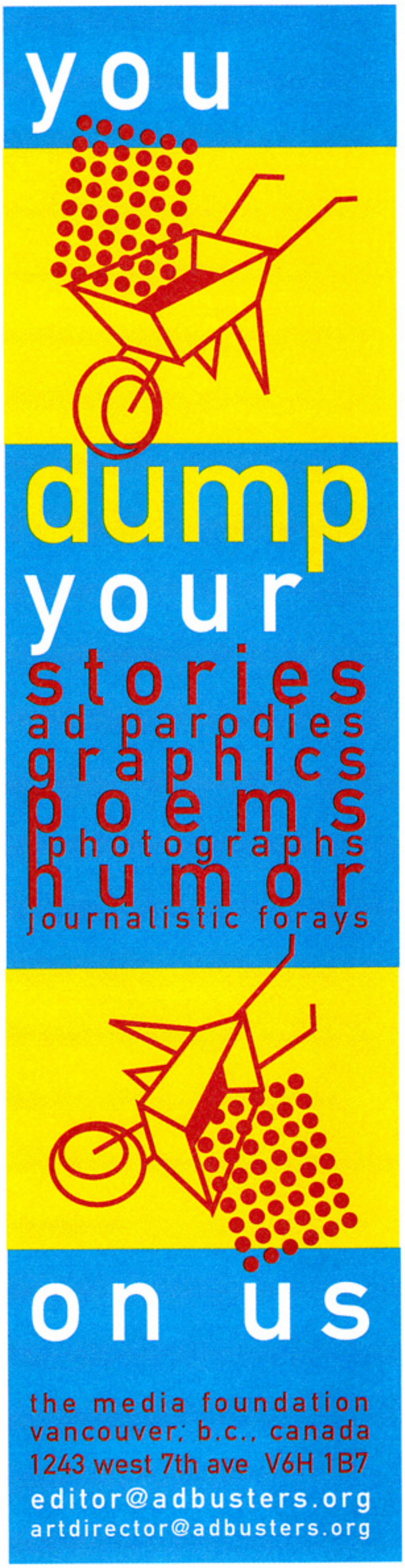
I was recently at a country music concert when the most absurd commercial began to unravel before my eyes. Tim McGraw had been on stage for about 45 minutes when suddenly two large Bud Lite bottles inflated behind him and a Bud Lite representative strutted onstage with two bottles of beer. He promptly handed one to McGraw and the two cheerfully clanked bottles in front of the sold-out crowd. This was the most disturbing action I have ever seen on stage. Where will these people draw the line?

David R. Groff
University of Maryland

In Creative Resistance [*Adbusters* #31], you discuss the fact that your spoof ads have lost their effectiveness because they no longer make CEOs squirm. While this may be so, these spoofs pack a punch with teenagers and heighten their awareness of media issues. I am an English and Media teacher in Montreal, Quebec, and *Adbusters'* spoof ads are displayed around my classroom. Few adolescents are concerned with global and environmental issues, but the spoof ads are effective springboards for initiating meaningful conversation on those topics. The more subtle approach that you are currently using does not pack a punch with most teens.

Your old spoof ads are sorely missed.

Linda
Montreal, Quebec



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Printing Transcontinental Printing Inc.
Color/Prepress Supreme Graphics
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Thank you to:
The Foundation for Deep Ecology
and also to: Masako Lasn, Hanae Tominaga, Farnoosh Abasi, Justin Blacklock, Derek Brunen, Sarah Haywood, Pashe Mehta, Greg Polakoff, Aaron Rolick, Theresa Sapergia, Jennifer Zwarich

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1243 West 7th Ave., Vancouver, BC, V6H 1B7, Canada •
Tel (604) 736-9401 • Fax (604) 737-6021 •
Email <adbusters@adbusters.org> • <www.adbusters.org>

Adbusters is printed on NEW LEAF PAPER:
60% total recycled, 30% post-consumer.
Printed in Canada <www.newleafpaper.com>

The illusion of anonymity given to those who use the Internet is alluring. You forget: who owns the fiber? Who built your machine? Who wrote your operating system? Who operates the net server you use? Yes, that's right, they have you and I just where they want us: sitting at a keyboard using their system.

Woody Allen once remarked that he found it strange that so many young hippie Jewish radicals of the '60s drove VW's (the Fuehrerwagen). Why are you supporting Time Warner or Nortel or whoever owns the system you are using?

Richard Bean
Hilton, New York

Your magazine and website invoke a Kafka-esque vision of plucky Joes like you and me getting fed up with the tide of mediocrity on television, fed up with being treated as a consumer rather than a person, fed up with the rat race.

Any hope of building a cultural revolution on the back of such resentment is ill-founded. There is no revolution without real material need. The postmodern angst of working meaningless jobs and indulging in mindless consumerism may drive people to heavy drinking, to antisocial behavior, to drugs, but it does not make people want to start a revolution. Nor does wishful thinking.

Joshua Mostafa
jmostafa@eaeurope.com

I am caught behind enemy lines. I am without food, sleep and shelter and will be for quite some time. The enemy sits right beside me and has no idea that I'm even here. I sit and bide my time. I hear instructions from the enemy and I follow them just to be safe and undetectable. I try not to show any emotion. I am forced to read *Marketing Magazine* every day and I shudder.

I will use their contradictions against them, and soon they will know that I'm a monster that they themselves have created. A billion-dollar industry has to produce some "garbage," and I am it.

Karl Orzechomsky
Toronto, Ontario
www.everyoneisdoomed.com

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Front Cover Painting
© Tomas Sanchez
Courtesy, Marlborough Gallery, New York

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Why No One Wants to Talk About Consumerism

So earnest, so uncool, so 1999 – the pundits hate any idea that won't behave like a trend

"It's like, the suburbs are so superficial. Yeah, dude, and like those bored housewives who sell like real estate are like so totally materialistic. Yeah, man, it's like these people spend their whole lives selling their soul to the man and they never stop to be like in the moment."

That was Ron Rosenbaum's take on *American Beauty* in the *New York Observer*, a must-read newspaper among the media/cultural elite. The writer's ire had been piqued by what he calls "dumb profundity," the superficial critique of superficiality. But his words hint at a broader message, one that goes beyond the discussion of an admittedly flawed Hollywood film; and right into the kitchen of the cultural gatekeepers. The message is: any serious mainstream questioning of consumer-cultural excess is old. Tired, not wired.

The gatekeepers are the cabal of young writers, editors and producers at the top of the media pyramid in New York and L.A. Arbiters of what is ripe for discussion, and what, conversely, is stupid and gauche, they are a crushingly jaded lot, with nano-second attention spans (and big personal investments in technology-driven capitalism). Something has wounded them deeply: perhaps it is the faint, terrible memory of Jimmy Carter going on national TV to address the spiritual crisis that had seized America, whose citizens had jilted God in favor of self-indulgent consumerism. It wasn't hip when Jimmy said it 23 years ago, and it ain't hip now.

The highbrow position in 2000 is to embrace low culture — sleazy, slummy, pedal-to-the-metal Americana. That doesn't mean condoning the Right, with its institutionalized religion and general bad taste. It just means saying, you know, We've done the global warming thing, the slave-to-the-brands thing, the whole gluttonous American corporate state thing. We *know*, already. Now kiss these things on the forehead and let them go. All you self-described 'progressive' journalists, you Luddites and tree-huggers and friends of Jedediah Purdy, consider yourselves warned. You can hold your counter-narrative to the fire, but it will not catch.

You, on the other hand, will be torched. Question the lavish parties of the chattering classes, and you're guilty of confusing "conspicuous consumption" with "conspicuous celebration," and are thus mingy and envious. Suggest that a major change to the First World lifestyle is even possible, and you're just cluelessly naïve. Lay the fish on the table directly — "all of us are destroying what we did not build" — and you're a self-righteous dork.

This is a pretty formidable news barrier, way more so than any overt censorship the media bosses might employ. The real Maginot line within the print and broadcast media is called cred-among-peers. No journalist wants to be branded deadly earnest or preachy or an outright flake, which can happen if you breach the protocol. Write critically about consumerism (not obliquely by, say, saluting the genius of *The Simpsons*) and you may find that the phone stops ringing in your freelancer's garret. (Thus does journalism increasingly become about journalists themselves — not a search for what's "true" or important, but simple maintenance of the writer's own place in the pantheon of cynics.)

Here's the paradox, though: you can't talk about it — but everybody is talking about it.

Out-of-control Yankee turboconsumerism is, in one form or another, the narrative of our time. It's the story of overvalued stocks, Silicon Valley teardown parties, the marketing and franchising of everyone and everything. It's the theme of a lot of contemporary art; it's standard fare in the monologues of the late-night TV hosts; it's on the mind of a whole subculture of computer geeks who hack the sites of transnationals. Advertisers themselves acknowledge it, if only to send it up, turning the whole corporate-rape-and-pillage ethos into something self-deprecating, something mock-heroic.

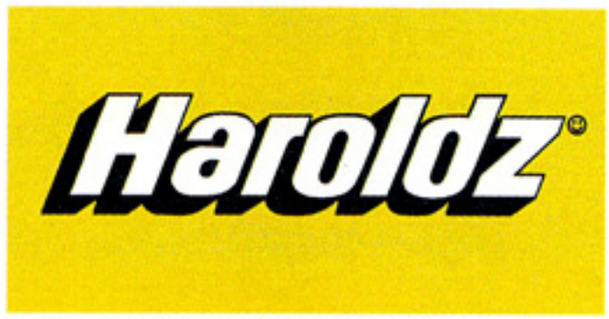
There *is* a growing backlash against American excess and, at the same time, American cultural imperialism. It's out in the >>

>> open in every other country. But the message does not get out straight-faced at home. Everyone talks about it, just about everyone jokes about it, a whole lot of people acknowledge it as an irritant. But no one is willing to call it a problem.

Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson warns that we are now approaching the earth's sixth great extinction event, and unless we radically alter consumption and lifestyle patterns, the vast majority of earth's species will be gone by the next millennium. You'd think this would be bigger news than, say, Britney Spears' breasts. You'd think it would be a story that — even if we have heard it before — bears repeating. You'd think some stories might simply be too important to be raised and lowered on the flagpole as "trends." But you'd be wrong. You clueless dork.

— *Harry Flood*

BRAND IDENTITY



SELF-PORTRAIT (LEARNED BORROWING)

SELF-PORTRAIT (SIMPLE PLEASURE)

SELF-PORTRAIT (PRESTIGE)

SELF-PORTRAIT (SENTIMENT)

Ah, to be as instantly identifiable as the world's celebrity brands. With his logo "self-portraits," Harold Lohner lived the dream. An artist and designer in Albany, New York, Lohner reports only one bump on his road to logo immortality: a Kinko's copy shop wouldn't output his prints, citing copyright infringement of their corporate cousins.

CASTRO ON OUR CONSUMER CULTURE

Cuba's leader questions capitalism's freedom of expression

In many ways, Cuba is a repressive country. The media stream is heavily censored, individual, artistic and political expression are constrained and, most significantly, the people are not free to go. Periodically, outsiders call Fidel Castro to account for these apparent breaches of human rights. Always, he refuses to admit his system is flawed — a maddeningly stubborn position to those of us in First World democracies.

In January of this year, Federico Mayor Zaragoza, former Director General of UNESCO, sat down with Castro in Havana. On the rights issue, Castro was predictably strong-headed. But the Jesuit-schooled president spun a line of argument that's hard to dismiss. Is it just standard Communist propaganda to suggest that Americans are another group of fish constrained by a tank they cannot see? Or is it the truth?

Zaragoza: I would now like to address a rather sensitive issue: that of freedom of expression and thought. The Cuban regime is regularly attacked for its repressive policy with regard to...

Castro: I can guess what you're going to say. First, I wonder if it is fair to discuss freedom of expression and thought in a region where the immense majority of the people are either totally or functionally illiterate. . . A large percentage of those living in developed societies are told what brand of soda they should drink, what cigarettes they should smoke, what clothes and shoes they should wear, what they should eat and what brand of food they should buy. Their political ideas are supplied in the same way.

Every year, a trillion dollars is spent on advertising. This rain pours on the helpless masses that are totally deprived of the necessary elements of judgment to formulate an opinion and the knowledge required for meditating and discerning. This has never happened before in the history of humanity. Primitive humans enjoyed greater freedom of thought. Jose Marti said, "To be educated in order to be free." We would have to add a dictum: freedom is impossible without culture. Education and culture are what the Revolution has most abundantly offered to our people, much more so than in a large number of the developed countries.

Living in a consumer society does not necessarily make people educated. It is amazing, sometimes, how their knowledge can be superficial and simplistic. It would perhaps be better to wait a while before talking about true freedom of expression and thought because that can never be reconciled with a brutal economic and social capitalist system that fails to respect culture, solidarity and ethics.

— *Staff*

RIP INC.

They came to life, they say, in the darkest corner of the biz-cult mindscape: "corporate tombstones" – customized trophies that the Big Boys bestow on each other to celebrate their financial feats. The tombstones are often designed to symbolize the company that has "died" through a merger or acquisition. There are oversized leucite Maybelline mascara tubes, Tropicana orange juice cartons, Land O' Lakes butter sticks, E-Trade asterisk logos and Sunoco gas pumps, all imprinted with the terms of the deal expressed as hefty sums of cash.

"Let's say a client comes in to see a banker about a prospective transaction," explains Jeff Segall, president of New Hampshire-based Corporate Presence, the largest corporate tombstone supplier in the US. "There clearly is value in having a number of leucite commemoratives on your desk. That's a wonderful reminder to have in front of a senior executive." — *Jennifer Bleyer*

ABC, NBC CLUTTER KINGS

Last year, ABC made TV history as the first network to air more than 15 minutes per hour of ads and station promos. Now the NBC peacock has also poked its beak through this once taboo barrier.

So far, the only backlash has come from advertising executives who fear their precious marketing messages are getting lost in the clutter. But a public backlash may also be brewing. Studies show* that the number of people suffering anxiety, depression and mood disorders is rising rapidly in the US and other industrialized countries — and that media overkill may be one of the root causes of this epidemic.

Watching less commercial TV may turn out to be much more than a way to reduce the annoyance and stress in your life. It could also be the key to better mental health. — *Kalle Lasn*

* see <www.adbusters.org>

Bigger Than Viagra

Super-drug is the flashest launch in history (but the same old pain in the gut)

The Beatles claimed to be "bigger than Jesus." Now pharmaceutical giant Searle/Pharmacia is doing much the same, touting its newest wonder drug as being "bigger than Viagra."

Just how big do you have to be to outdo the blockbuster anti-impotence pill known in the industry as "Pfizer's Riser?" In 1999, Searle shipped $1.5 billion US worth of Celebrex, its new arthritis drug, shattering every sales record. It was the most successful pharmaceutical launch in history.

But what made the drug so big? State-of-the-art science? Superlative relief of arthritis sufferers' pain?

Try high-octane marketing.

Job number one for Searle was to "create a market." This involved a massive disease makeover, to cast arthritis as a disease of the masses. (It isn't just for old people anymore: it can affect *you*.) A subsidiary of Monsanto, Searle likely borrowed a few recipes from the momma corp in molding public opinion. In the first four months of 1999, the number of patient visits to US physicians for osteoarthritis increased by 18 percent, according to US drug industry analyst Scott-Levin.

Step two: decapitate the competition. Searle pointed out that the older arthritis drugs on the market — and there are dozens to chose from — can kill you. This is true. The medical establishment has known for decades that arthritis drugs cause thousands of North Americans to die of stomach bleeding each year. But the fact has never before been actually promoted by the drug industry.

Next, Searle had to buy brand awareness. This meant recruiting physicians, mostly rheumatologists, to pitch the wonders of Celebrex to their peers. In the first six months of 2000, Celebrex marketers sponsored 3,445 meetings and canape-and-wine events to hawk the drug to doctors.(1)

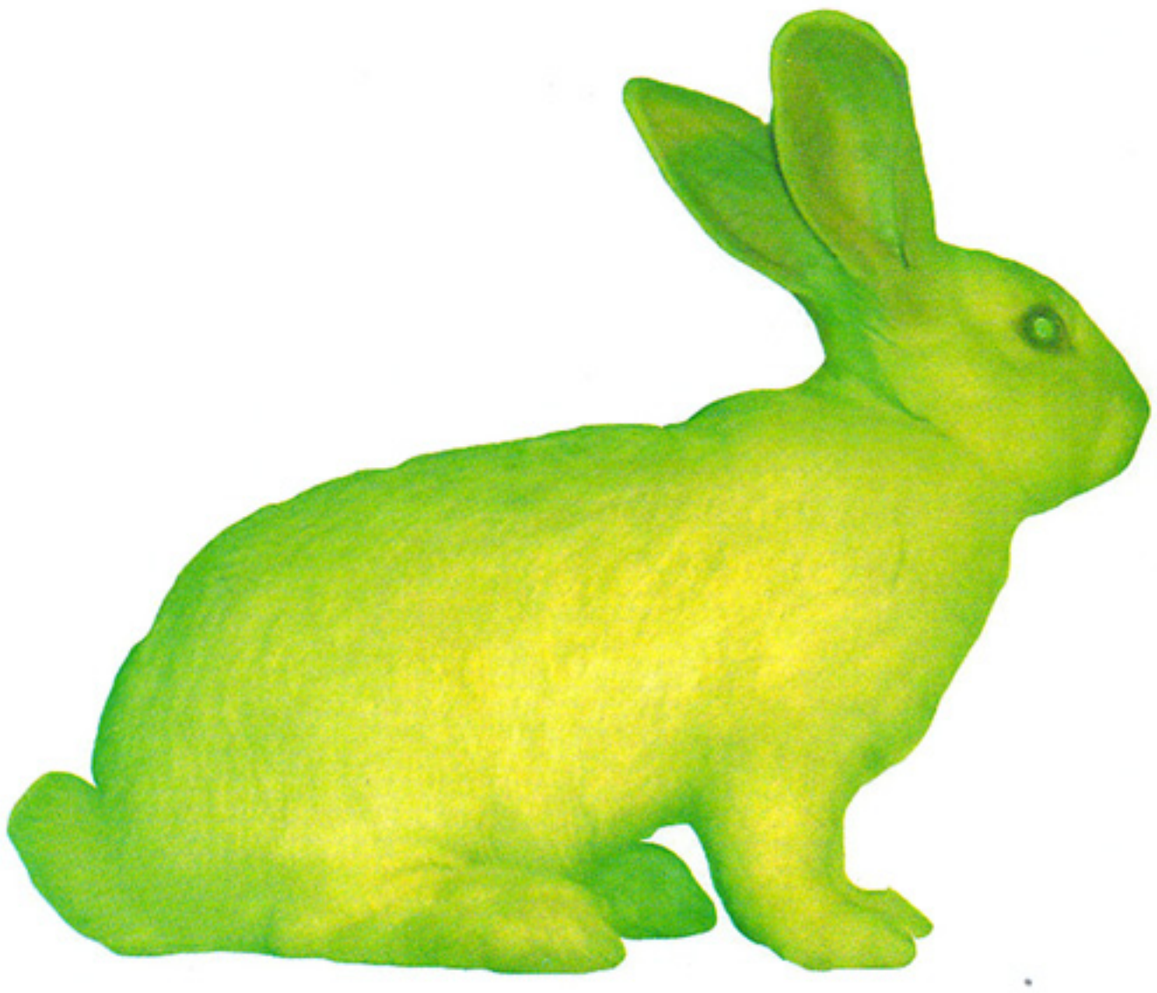
To finish the job, Searle rounded up a few converts, ordinary folk like your Aunt Martha, and trained them as Celebrex evangelists to deliver poignant soundbites on TV, at public forums and meetings with policy-makers. The goal is woo the more than 47 million North American arthritis sufferers over to Celebrex.

But here's the thing you won't hear. While Celebrex is up to ten times more expensive than its competition, there's little proof it is much safer.(2) Even the studies used to promote the drug reveal that like other antiarthritics, Celebrex can cause stomach perforations, bleeding, and diarrhea. It can also prevent your ulcers from healing. Canada has already recorded 6 deaths linked to Celebrex. The US FDA decided back in December, 1998, that due to safety concerns, Celebrex would have to be labeled with the same safety warnings as all the other antiarthritics on the market.

So when an Aunt Martha lookalike beckons you with her "trust me" schtick, listen closely. You'll likely hear the sound of cash registers in the background. — *Basil Smallwood*

Basil Smallwood is a pseudonym for a Canadian health-care consultant.

(1) Scott-Levin, Physician Meeting & Event Audit, Jan-June 2000.
(2) The most recent independent studies suggest Celebrex is between 1 and 2 percent less likely to cause harmful side-effects than ibuprofen.



GLOBUNNY

How do you know if a rabbit is a work of art? It glows in the dark. Alba – a.k.a. "GFP Bunny" – is the brainspawn of Chicago artist Eduardo Kac, who worked with French scientists to splice a green fluorescent protein from a phosphorescent jellyfish into the rabbit. Kac aimed to show that biology is now "writerly and programmable," adding that transgenic artists must "respect, nurture and love the life created."

A more recent Kac project began with a line from the Book of Genesis,"Let man have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

"We do not accept its meaning in the form we inherited it," says Kac of the biblical buzzphrase. No kidding. Kac used Morse code to convert the words into DNA base pairs, which were transposed into the genetic structure of bacteria. The bacteria's natural mutation was then accelerated by blasts of UV light controlled by visitors to a website. And if any of this sounds alarming, consider one more fact: *Scientific American* reports a basic garage genetics lab can be scratched together for $3,000 US.

PHOTO: CHRYSTELLE FONTAINE

THE M.E.* INDEX *Mental Environment

FRY GUY PRESIDENT Lame-duck President Bill Clinton hands the reins of the Democratic Party to Al Gore and — in his first act as an "everyday American" — stops his motorcade at McDonald's for fries, cola, and a crispy chicken sandwich. Clinton's fast-food citizenship troubles the Index, but crisis is averted by the presidential daughter. Chelsea Clinton tells reporters she has avoided McDonald's for eight years. "I'm a big health food freak and a vegetarian devotee," says the White House culture jammer. Stability returns to the mental environment.

GAS HUFFING The Professional Lawn Care Association of Ontario, Canada, wants kids to remember the smell of more than just cinnamon buns and autumn bonfires. The organization makes the news with plans to mask lawn and garden pesticides with the scent of bubblegum and cherries. The Index knows a good idea when it hears one. And it doesn't.

AD RAGE A US ad firm faces criminal charges in Peru after an illegal crane falls and damages the Intihuatana, a stone sundial at the ruins of Machu Picchu. "They've struck at our most sacred inheritance," says one archaeologist. And what product needed a marketing boost from the Inca ancients? Beer. After a short, stiff drink, the Index recovers.

WANTED: WEB EDITOR For a short but sweet time, a new website for genetically modified NatureMark potatoes links not to Monsanto, the parent company, but to <www.monsantos.com>, the company's most creative critic. Simple mistake, or inside jam? The Index loves the possibilities.

VICTORY, VICTORIA Fearing an outbreak of democracy, Victoria, Canada, becomes the first city to cancel a post-Seattle global meeting. The NATO 2001 conference goes down after security experts predict a $3-million budget and threaten to wrap the stately Empress Hotel in razor wire. The mental environment gains ground as fast as the corporate globalists lose it.

BLACK OCTOBER "Panic engulfs the markets." The Index soars.

— James MacKinnon

TURKEY'S CELL CRAZE

According to the World Health Organization, cell phone transmitters should be mounted on towers or skyscrapers to protect passers-by from possible health effects. Imagine parents' surprise in Sisli, Turkey, then, when they found an illegal station just meters from a school — and painted green to match its surroundings.

The Turkish press is full of reports of illegal cell bases, and of nearby citizens who suffer sudden nausea, headaches, dizziness and immune system failures. As companies like Turkcell cram base stations into any urban crevice, thousands of Turks are joining signature campaigns and protest demonstrations. Already, some mayors are promising to clamp down on the cellular cheats.

The popularity of cell phones is rising worldwide, and the health implications remain to be determined. In Turkey, though, even experts like Gazi Ipek, head of the Electronics Engineers Chamber, say people need to fight for proper precautions. "As long as there is public pressure, the government won't be able to allow companies to install base stations wherever they want."

— Craig Segal

PHOTO: A. KOLMYKOV

The Day the TV Died

Russia suffers through a blackout – but just imagine a TV-free America

On the first night there would be two sounds on the streets: breaking glass, and the incessant ringing of security alarms. Everywhere people running, pandemonium, investment bankers carrying stolen TVs . . . a mounted policeman lies on the ground, pinned under his horse, which is shot through the neck; he calls for backup . . . no help is forthcoming . . .

On the first night without television in the United States, the president would declare the entire country a federal disaster area. Without TV, Americans would be forced to think for themselves. Forced to think for themselves, the vast majority would lose their minds within the space of a few hours. Long-suppressed feelings of resentment and rage would escape the collective unconscious and leap to the surface, and soon a well-armed civilian population would become irrational and belligerent.

In Russia, the week-long TV blackout that followed the Ostankino transmission tower fire in September was an annoyance, but hardly the catastrophe the incident would represent in the US. Russians are tougher, more dulled to disaster than their American counterparts, who have never suffered a war on their own territory and often live to the age of 40 without ever peeling a potato. Russians, as a whole, are in much better psychological health than Americans, who in many cases are just a few hours of enforced boredom away from extreme psychotic episodes.

In Russia, surprisingly large numbers of people have lives outside of their jobs. Many have parents who live nearby, friends who are welcome to visit unannounced, and acquaintances with whom they will share a bottle of vodka for no particular reason. Furthermore — and this is something that most Americans would find revolutionary — there are even a great many Russians who have living grandparents that they visit voluntarily.

It's true, some young Americans do marry. But few young people know how to cook these days, so most couples go to restaurants more or less every night. Home is a place for sleeping and for watching TV. On the rare occasion that a guest is over, it's because you want to watch something on television together.

Television. It has come to be thought of by Americans as their great reward for adherence to the social contract. Work is the one acceptable vice in America; people are encouraged to be greedy. TV is the only acceptable escape. In other countries people drink, have affairs, raise children. Americans no longer raise children, because they take too much time away from work. Babies cry while you are trying to iron a shirt for a meeting. They make you come home at 8:30, while the guy in the next office, who has no children, is ready to stay until 9:00. Worst of all, babies may ruin the Swedish furniture you worked so hard to buy.

So TV is it. People come home from work, sit down, and watch 50 or 60 channels' worth, sometimes nine or ten hours at a time. It's an infinitely varied other-world that couldn't be more different than the narrow, tiring, undignified high-pressure life you actually lead. And for many in the US, television is no longer enough. That's why, at least once a week, some American goes into his office and shoots a few people before killing himself, shouting things like, "Was it worth it? Was it worth it?" In Nikolai Gogol's famous story, Akaky Akakiyevich died when he lost his overcoat; in America, they kill when they lose their patience.

No TV in America. It would make the Ostankino disaster seem like a minor car accident. On the first day, people would stop going to work. By the second day, they'd be openly carrying guns. There would be riots, theft, arson, gang warfare, revolution. You would walk down the street and see people hurling themselves out the window, or hear everywhere the sound of stools being kicked out from under soon-to-be-hanging bodies . . .

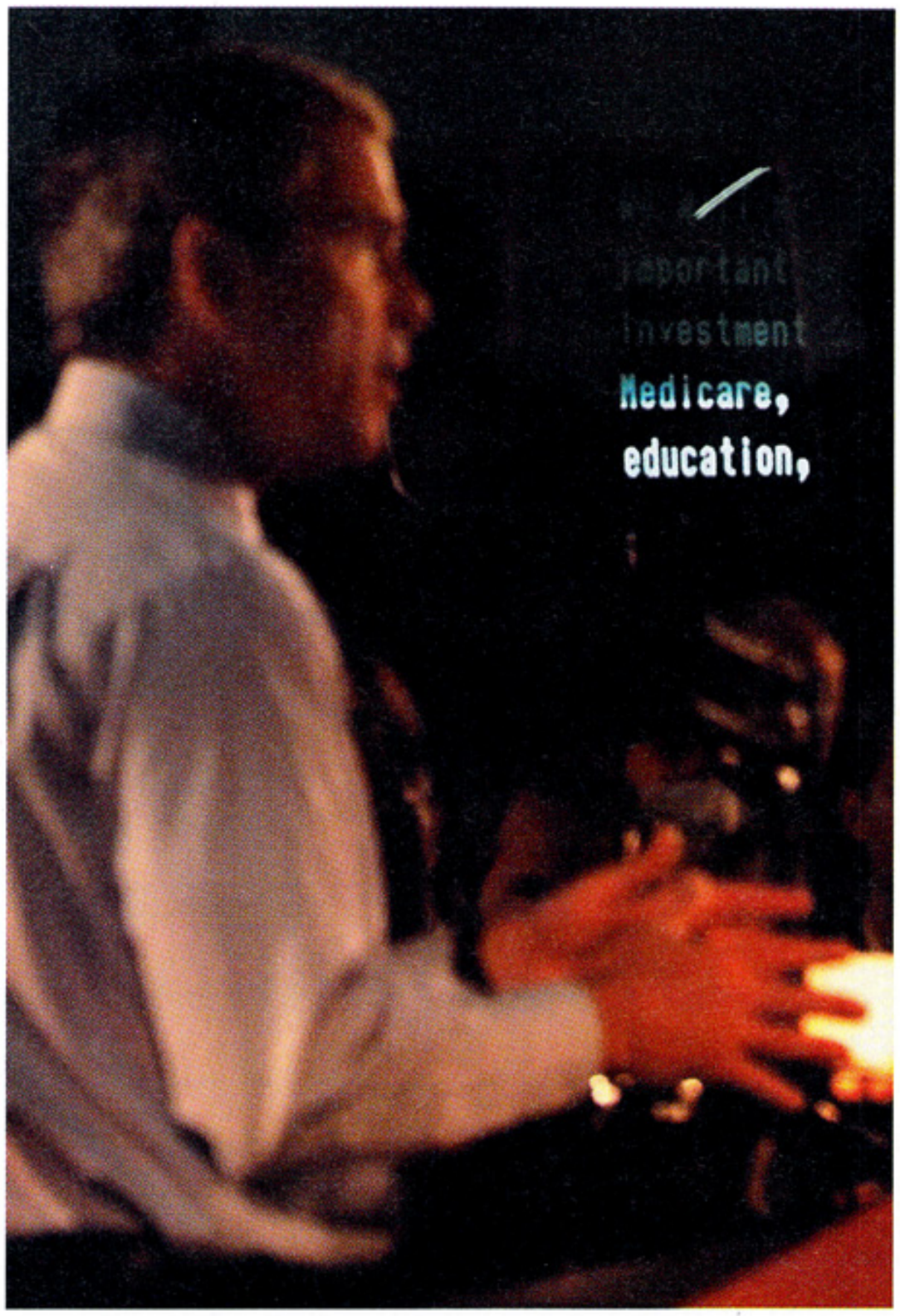
Russians have real-life problems to worry about — they handle these things much better. In America, real life hasn't been observed by scientists since sometime around 1947. Forced to face it, our people wouldn't handle it well. Unfortunately, we'll never see it happen. You see, our firemen and safety engineers, particularly around our TV towers, they work long hours, too.

— Matt Taibbi

Reprinted from the Russian newspaper Vremya-Novosti. *Matt Taibbi is the editor of the Moscow-based alternative newspaper* the eXile, <*www.exile.ru*>.

Electronic Democracy

Television, TelePrompTers, and the rise of robo-politics



GREEN BAY, WISCONSIN: GEORGE BUSH CHANNELS HIS HANDLERS THROUGH THE TELEPROMPTER, "ONE OF THE GREAT, OVERLOOKED SYMBOLS OF THE REPUBLIC."

PHOTO: AP PHOTO/WILFREDO LEE

Recently, my pal Tom, who lives on Vancouver Island, BC, walked into a local TV station and sat down to be interviewed about the book he had written and was on tour to promote. The book was a collection of essays on farm life. In it, Tom comes off as a rugged and resourceful outdoorsman, cutting wood, raising chickens and sometimes crewing on a tugboat for extra cash. These tales are true. But the interviewer, who sat there smugly behind his particle-board desk, didn't believe a word of it. "I'm going to be frank," the guy said. "I think that narrator is not you. I think you made most of the book up. I'll bet you've never picked up a chainsaw in your life."

Tom looked at the TV host for a moment. Then, without a word, he got out of his chair. He walked out of the studio. From the trunk of his car, he grabbed a big Stihl birch-bucker and a couple of pairs of protective goggles, and he brought them back into the studio. He gave one pair of goggles to the host and he put one pair on himself. And then, as the camera rolled, and the host backed cautiously into a corner, and a producer watched beetle-browed from the wings, Tom fired up the chainsaw and, amidst a shower of wood chips, cut the desk in half.

When's the last time you saw something like that on live TV? (I'm talking about a truly spontaneous media moment, as distinct from the engineered spontaneity of shock-jocks like Tom Green and Howard Stern.) What my friend Tom did came straight from the gut. No one told him to do it; I don't think he knew himself that he was going to do it. It was an unmediated expression of what he was feeling, and who he is.

This kind of thing is of course anathema to the actors, broadcasters and public figures whose image is built and shaped by network television. Combine the risk-aversion of live network TV — where a rogue remark can cost millions in ad revenue — with the risk-aversion of presidential politics — where a single gaffe can cost an election — and there isn't much room for hearts on sleeves. The panopticon of mediated politics conditions its participants to repress authentic responses in favor of expedient ones. It does so so effectively that politicians have their personalities, in a sense, re-engineered.

And so the presidential candidate addresses the public backed by a team of impression managers so paranoid that even the "Wow!"s are scripted. All this happens in the most "democratic" forum we have. (Unless you count the Internet. This election cycle, the website Web, White and Blue hosted an unprecedented, ongoing "cyber-debate," during which individual Americans could put questions to the candidates. Unfortunately, the candidates responded with carefully crafted press releases they clearly did not write. Another promising moment for democracy poleaxed.) The press is complicit at every turn, of course. Journalists junket by the thousands to non-events like the conventions and cover them like real news. They pounce on blunders and reward invective, pushing along what author Kathleen Hall Jamieson calls the "Pavlovian democracy" of television.

You could argue the real star of this year's presidential campaign was the TelePrompTer—that great, overlooked symbol of the Republic. If the invention of TV itself reduced the electoral system to a 30-second sound bite, the TelePrompTer compounded the restriction; it imposed artifice on artifice.

On the campaign trail, Bush and Gore customarily arrived a little early for their televised speeches. They stood on stage and practiced looking at the TelePrompTer screens, which flanked the podium, and would require them to turn their heads at intervals, like spectators at an exceptionally slow tennis match. They knew they would sink or swim by the words that rose into view. Like presenters at the Oscars, they would, as Michael Musto once put it, "dredge up their most insincere sincerity and most vain humility as they compete for crumbs of acceptance."

The Bush camp knew a good trade-off: every minute their man was standing in front of a TelePrompTer (where words are helpfully spelled out phonetically: that's "Nu-Clee-er," not "Nu-Kyoo-Ler") was a minute he was not out in a public square where reporters could hit him with a pop quiz. In Philadelphia, Bush

delivered the speech of his life, as written by journalist Michael
Gerson. It was 17 drafts strong, and Bush had practiced, practiced, practiced it ("I do not need to take your pulse before I know my own mind. I do not reinvent myself at every turn. I am not running in borrowed clothes. . . ") at home, at the ranch, at the family retreat in Maine, until he had it cold. Until the words he didn't write no longer even matched the thoughts he hadn't hatched.

Al Gore, his people proudly point out, often writes his own speeches. But Gore's own finest moment of the campaign also came in front of a TelePrompTer when he killed on Letterman with jokes his people had found for him online. Gore is so much a poll-and-focus-group product, from the color of his suits to the "alpha-ness" of his demeanor to the intensity of his kisses, that his friends say they don't recognize the guy they know in the public guy they see on TV.

Must it be this way? Must there be, at the level of national or international politics, a wall of smoke between the leaders and the people? Perhaps not. Look at Cuba. Whatever you might think of Castro's administration, the man can stand up in a baseball stadium, speak without notes for two hours, and hold his audience spellbound. In Prague, Vaclav Havel often pulled epigrams for the ages out of the air.

Pumping that kind of oxygen into American politics may take an act of god, or serendipity. What if, at a crucial moment in an important live debate, the TelePrompTers just went black? What would a candidate do, or say? Would he ad-lib a joke? Would he reach for what was in his heart? In 1960, Robert Frost stepped up on stage in Washington to deliver the new poem he'd just written for John Kennedy's inauguration. But the sun was glaring off the TelePrompTer screen. He couldn't read it. Paralyzed, with half a billion people watching, he fell back on his only option: he recited, from memory, another of his poems, "The Gift, Outright." At least Robert Frost had something worthwhile in his head — a Robert Frost poem. I suspect that if candidate Gore shared what was on his mind you'd get a few abstract words about public policy. And if candidate Bush shared what was on his mind, you'd get the lyrics to "Green Acres." But who knows? Aren't these the sorts of things the citizens deserve to find out?

— *Bruce Grierson*

DREAM SOCIETY

Grant Leach is feeling buoyant. "Emotions are becoming commercialized," enthuses the managing director of The Revo Group advertising agency. "In the future, consumers will no longer buy products but rather lifestyles and the stories, experiences and emotions products convey."

The Revo Group, based in Auckland, New Zealand, is taking steps to be a part of that future shock. Step one: hire the services of Rolf Jensen, a director with the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies and author of *The Dream Society*.

Using ads to link products with an image or myth is at least as old as the 1954 premiere of the Marlboro Man. To get a sense of where Jensen is heading, though, look to the launch of the new VW Beetle – a product marketed as the completion of a life circle for the world's baby boomers and aging hippies.

"Stories will be the key to reaching emotional heartstrings," Leach explains. "But these will not be stories as we traditionally know them. This is where the major divergence from traditional branding will occur."

Under a Jensen scenario, a company's story won't end with its marketing campaign. Its stores will be like theme parks, but so too will its offices; corporations will be like tribes that sell their legends to any consumer looking to invest in emotional wealth. Competing products, Jensen notes, are increasingly similar. In the future, the product will hardly matter at all – only its story will.

"We have lived as hunters, as farmers, we have worked in factories and now our icon is a computer," Jensen writes. "But this cannot last."

In *The Dream Society*, Jensen outlines six dream-age market categories: the market for adventure, the market for loving and belonging, the market for care, the who-am-I market, the market for peace of mind, and the market for conviction. "The ability to tap into the imagination of the consumer will provide the mechanism by which the consumer will pay a premium for a product or service."

Storytelling: it really is the oldest trick in the book of human history. And if it can transform commerce, Grant Leach will celebrate the paradigm shift with a new job title.

"The product manager becomes the chief imagination officer, members of marketing teams will have titles such as messaging champion, director of mind and moods, and assistant storyteller," he says. "And the CEO? He will be the dream leader."

— Tali Williams is a freelance journalist and culture-jammer in Wellington, New Zealand.

ILLUSTRATION: WWW.ICONPEOPLE.COM

IT'S THE *SHILL*, STUPID

Suddenly, everyone's talking about the bloodlust of media. In July, the White House convened the Public Health Summit on Entertainment Violence, with the debate carried forward by Democratic vice-presidential candidate Joseph Lieberman and Republican Senator John McCain. A coalition of major US medical associations has agreed that violence in the media can cause violent behavior in children — a statement comparable to the medical consensus that cigarettes cause cancer. Oprah cares about it. Everyone cares.

And so, the media machines roll out their tired old claim: that as producers of culture — *art* — they must resist the censors. With accusing eyes, they stare back at their critics. "What do you want to censor first?" they ask. "Underground comics? Art-house films? The Bible?"

The tables turn. McCain and Lieberman declare, "This is not a call for censorship." US trade commission chair Robert Pitofsky agrees: "We will not be the modern embodiment of the thought police."

Censorship is a difficult subject; in the current media violence debate, it's also a fool's game. Hollywood and the music industry are the world's most opportunistic free-speech heroes — just ask the radical artists who are their fiercest critics. When the media giants take the high road, it's because they're wanted for highway robbery down on the low one.

The media violence question that needs vigorous debate today has little to do with cutting-edge art or cultural self-discovery. Rather, the question is this: to what extent do the dominant, essentially unavoidable mass media knowingly use violence as a sales and ratings draw? A 1996 Canadian study defined it as *undue exploitation*. To what degree is violence used not to explore ideas or confront reality, but as the delivery vehicle to "move product"?

The pop culture moguls want to enter a deep debate because their real crimes are shallow. Media violence isn't about the values of the artist. It's about the ethics of the shill.

— James MacKinnon

Ad, Subtract

Backlash victories adding up

The Madison-based Center for the Study of Commercialism in Education monitors just how deeply commercial agents have sunk their talons into American public schools. According to its studies, the amount of sponsored educational material has climbed 1,800 percent in the last decade. Exclusive licensing agreements are up 1,300 percent. Clearly, we'd better get used to the idea of Nike-flogging gym teachers, jingle-studded school cheers, and water fountains running with Coke: resistance to the branding of education is futile.

Or is it?

In fact, the backlash against in-school marketing is growing, and growing organized. In the last few months the heat has been dialled up on some of the organizations most determined to turn students into consumers.

Channel One, the in-class systems provider that trades electronics for eyeballs, now runs ads in a quarter of all US classrooms; but that arrangement is increasingly being seen as a devil's bargain. Channel One's Canadian counterpart, the Youth News Network, has faced increased opposition and outright condemnation by the education ministers in two provinces; recently, it suspended broadcasting until at least January.

Zapme!, a California company that provides free computer and Internet access with continually flashing on-screen ads, is also under pressure. A broad coalition of consumer groups, led by Ralph Nader's Commercial Alert, has appealed to governors in all 50 states to stop Zapme!'s incursions into the schools — particularly its extraction of valuable personal data from student-users. A new bill that would prohibit market-research in schools without parental consent awaits reading in the US House of Representatives.

Meanwhile, school boards in Madison, Wisconsin, San Francisco, southwest Michigan and Philadelphia, have quashed potentially lucrative deals between soft-drink manufacturers and school districts.

And in September, the US General Accounting Office released the first-ever government study to address the rise of commercialism in schools — which should raise the issue's profile enormously.

— Staff

LOWER EDUCATION

Corporations are a ubiquitous presence on North American university and college campuses, their money funding everything from football to professorships. So if students sit in corporate-sponsored buildings wearing corporate-sponsored jerseys, being taught by corporate-sponsored profs, it was only a matter of time before some of them would seek some sponsorship of their own.

Introducing America's first sellout college hopefuls: Chris Barrett and Luke McCabe, high school students from New Jersey who are ready to become corporate "spokesguys" in return for college tuition payments. Why study when you can sell out? *<www.chrisandluke.com>*

— Dominique Ritter

·BOM·

I have memories of the sky
Endless green forests
Apple green oceans
I've never seen any of them
I grew up with Mortal Kombat
McDonald's and Nike shoes
Jesus is in the TV
Heaven is in the driveway
My daughter has my eyes
They see nothing

— Ted Child

PHOTO: GLOBE AND MAIL/FRED LUM

Gucci gets in on the mini-me designer market with its child-sized mink trench coat (approximately $4,250 US by special order at 1-800-234-8224).

CULT OF THE WEIRD

A constant bombardment, a spiralling madness, a grand delusion, a world on fire. Another ho-hum lesson in consumer culture.

BY BILL MCKIBBEN

POSTCARDS: OBLIQUE DESIGN

Henry Thoreau used to avoid strolling the main street of his native Concord. Too many signs! Placards hung above every door, "some to catch him by the appetite, as the tavern; some by the fancy, as the jeweler's; and others by the hair or the feet or the skirts, as the barber, the shoemaker, or the tailor." The town didn't greet him as Henry Thoreau, citizen and friend, but as Henry Thoreau, man with perhaps some money in his pocket.

To our eyes, of course, Concord of that era would look quaint beyond belief — we'd take that tavern sign and stick it in some colonial Williamsburg as a symbol of the unhurried rustic past. But Thoreau had unbelievably sensitive radar. He could extrapolate. The opening years of the 21st century would depress him, but they would not surprise him.

Not the advertising in the schools, nor in the public washroom, nor at the gas pump. Not the Pizza Hut logo on the side of the rocket heading up to build the space station. It all flows from the assumption — now so natural we hardly notice it — that we exist to consume. That the work of a lifetime is accumulation.

Oh god — I can see the eyes rolling. Henry freaking Thoreau. Everyone knows it's a consumer society. Tell us something new.

But that's the point — I can't tell you something new. Turn off the irony switch in your brain; just for a moment stop demanding novelty. The central fact of our time, the only fact that really matters if you're trying to understand who we are, is that we live in the most developed consumer society there ever was. To us it seems normal, like water to a fish. But it's screamingly bizarre: humans since the end of World War II have consumed more stuff than all of humanity in all the millennia before. The last five decades mark the weirdest epoch in human history. If we could step back far enough to see it clearly, in fact, our time on Earth is almost beyond parody.

Take, for instance, a man named David Alpert, recently profiled by the *New York Times* in an article on the proliferation of remote controls. Alpert owns 55 remote controls to operate the various gadgets in his Long Island home. He seems to have consumed successfully — not only does he have a home entertainment center and a subwoofer and an air-conditioner and ovens that heat food in several different ways and dozens of lightbulbs and computers and TVs and radios, he has remote controls to make sure that he doesn't need to actually touch his machinery. (And he is only mildly ahead of the curve — remotes already outnumber people in the US). The Times article doesn't suggest he might want to reduce his amount of stuff; instead, it recommends spending $400 on a new "supergadget" remote that can control everything. "It was awesome," reported Mr. Alpert of his

experience with the wonder wand. However, it broke. "Now the innocence is gone. We know what life is like if the remote breaks. We know the chaos."

But wait, there's more.

Alpert is identified in passing by the *Times* as president of an Internet startup called MarketingInfo. If you visit his website, you find that it's a gathering spot for anyone engaged in the business of buying and selling market research, the kind of people who might be interested in articles on, say, selling to teens ("teens have a keen sense of 'me,'" whether it's "selecting the color of their laptop . . . or customizing the cover of their cell phones"). Another item hectored marketers about the coming battle for mobile "M-marketing." They'd need to condense their brand identity "because the race for real estate on the cell phone display has already begun." A recommended method would be to use "phrases that the consumer can recognize as being the speech of your brand." The given example: Coca-Cola, which over the past six months has promoted itself as a kind of official sponsor for the word "Enjoy!"

Do you see what I mean about weird? We live under an enchantment, a spell, an incantation. *Enjoy!* That enchantment, sung to us in our cradles, may seem "normal," it may seem desirable, and it may seem unchallengeably strong. But in fact it's under siege.

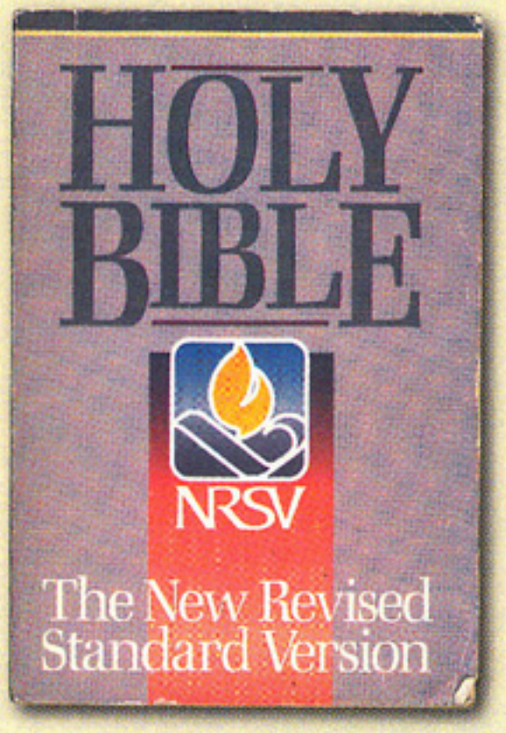
For one thing, there is still a real world existing outside this dense cloud of marketing and consuming, and here is what is happening to it: it's getting warmer. The North Pole is melting. Tropical diseases are spreading to temperate climates. Storms are growing more intense, more frequent. And — surprise, surprise — it has something to do with all that buying. As a standard rule of thumb, spending a dollar in our economy uses about a liter of oil: for manufacturing, shipping, advertising, running whatever item you've purchased. Not every purchase is equal, obviously. Buying a used bike at a garage sale is different from buying a Ford Exploiter. But as a rule of thumb it works. If you spend, you heat: Hurricanes 'R' Us. Ask yourself these two questions if you want to understand the physical constraints we face: could the six billion people now inhabiting the Earth (soon to be ten billion) all consume like middle-class Americans without overwhelming the planet? If we keep consuming in such a fashion, will they want to try?

There's an even bigger challenge brewing for the weavers of this enchantment, however, and it comes from the inside, not the outside. Forget what consumerism is doing to the atmosphere and ask yourself what it's doing to your soul.

I performed an odd experiment once. I found the biggest cable TV system on the planet, which was then in Fairfax County, Virginia, and I persuaded people there to tape for me everything that came across those hundred

(continued after consumer book ads) >>

1

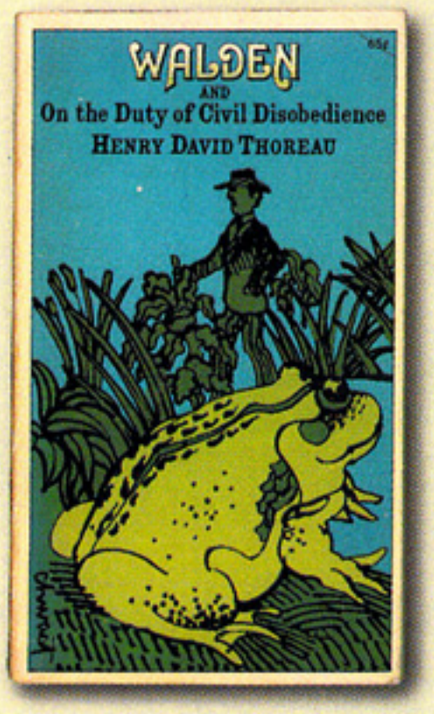


THE BIBLE
Various versions

The classic father-son story, with "the rules" for a life of meaning. Matthew 19:24 "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Testify, brother!

PAPERBACK
Free

2



WALDEN
By: Henry David Thoreau
Published: 1854

"The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. . . A stereotyped but unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind." In a cabin in the New England woods, Thoreau boycotts the America of materialism, advertising, dreary work and artificial status. The original back-to-basics bible from a visionary critic.

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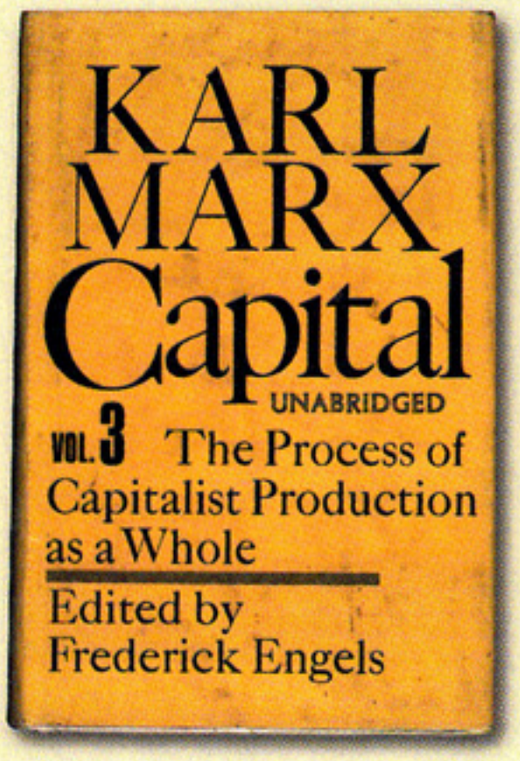
3



CAPITAL
By: Karl Marx
Published: 1894

The company bosses have hatched a plan: put the squeeze on their quarrelsome workers, create a market for more and more products, and strike it rich! But first, they have to contend with a German mastermind who sees right through their plan for ever-expanding consumption. "The market must be continually extended, so that its in-terrelations and the conditions regulating them assume more and more the form of a natural law. . ." Globalization predicted, in a spunky 900 pages!

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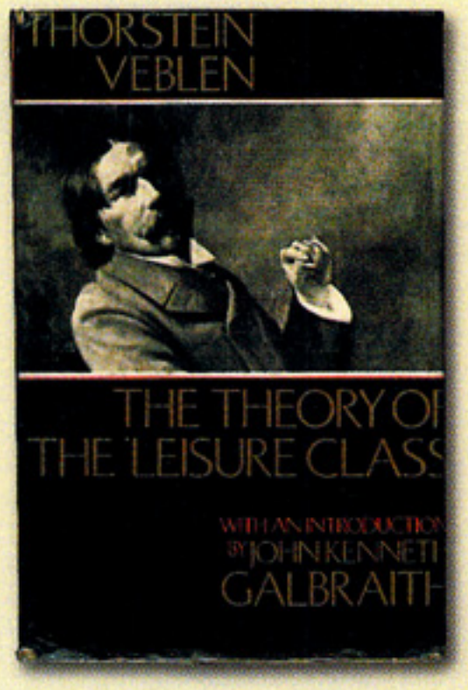

THE THEORY OF THE LEISURE CLASS
By: Thorstein Veblen
Published: 1899

A legendary economic philosopher compares the habits of the privileged to the rituals of so-called "bushmen" — and owes an apology to the bushmen. Veblen coined the term "conspicuous consumption" and showed why social power demands constantly changing fashions, bland art, absurdly expensive salt shakers, and other norms of what H.L. Mencken later called "America's booboisie."

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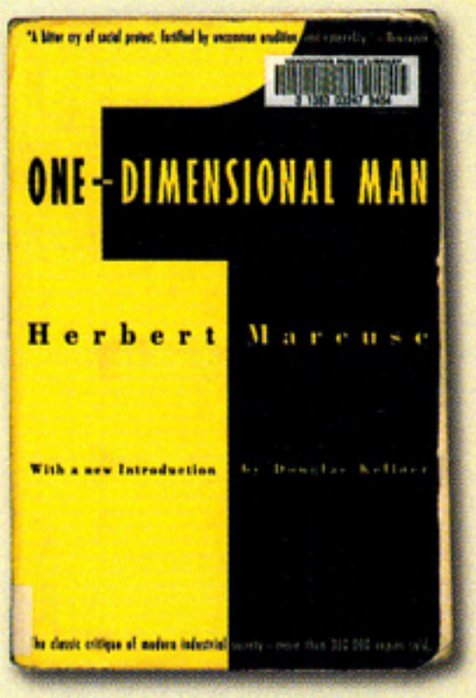

ONE-DIMENSIONAL MAN
By: Herbert Marcuse
Published: 1964

The logic of advanced consumer culture is unveiled by the crown prince of the Frankfurt School of critical theorists. When you buy a product or service, you're also buying a faith in the system that produced it. As long as you remain convinced that the goods satisfy your needs, you will resist any serious challenge to the system. Eventually, only the given system seems possible. Welcome to the "one-dimensional society" — and a "comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom."

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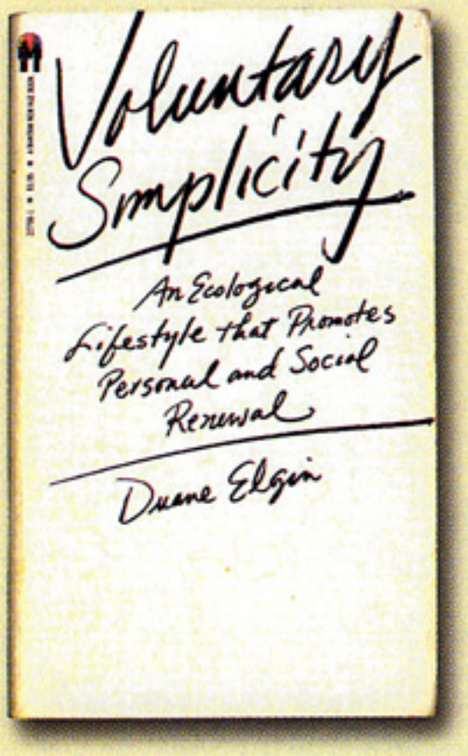

VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY
By: Duane Elgin
Published: 1981

Treat yourself to the book that launched the simplicity movement. Much more than a call for cycling and recycling, Elgin's opus shows that every personal choice is a chance for action, statement, and engagement. "The stuff of social transformation is identical with the stuff from which our daily lives are made," he says. And the greatest crisis of our daily lives? Too much stuff. You heard it here first!

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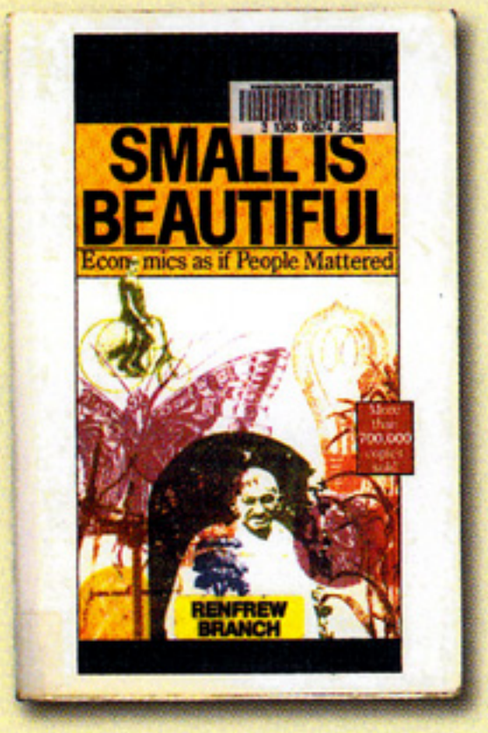

SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL
By: E.F. Schumacher
Published: 1973

In 1969, economics became an official Nobel science. Four years later, Schumacher suggested that Western economics be scrapped and rebuilt "as if people mattered." Rhodes scholar and classical anarchist, Schumacher brings zest to ideals of human-scale technology, creative work, local power, and a life that is simply good — "amazingly small means leading to extraordinarily satisfactory results." Nanotech for the soul. A sleeper hit!

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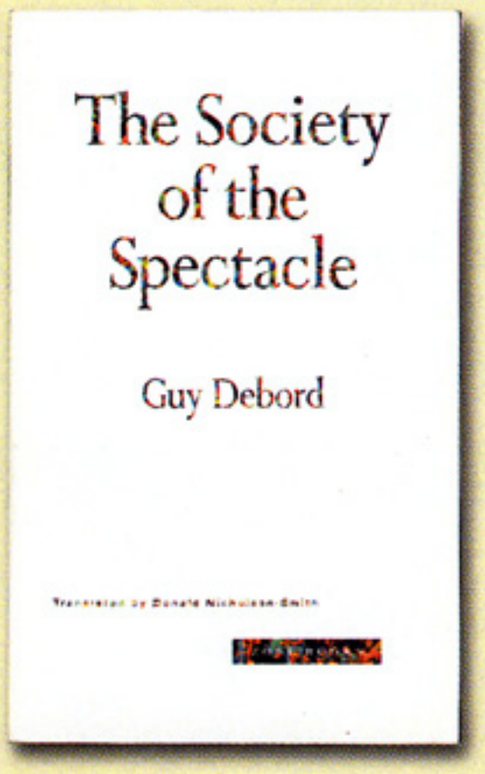

THE SOCIETY OF THE SPECTACLE
By: Guy Debord
Published: 1967

"All that once was directly lived has become representation," writes Debord. Another po-mo promoter of meaninglessness? Not at all. To Debord, our culture of illusion points to something very real: power. "The spectacle is *capital* accumulated to the point where it becomes image," he says. Insight into the age of branding, Disney's takeover of Times Square and the philanthropy of Bill Gates. Numbered paragraphs for easy reading!

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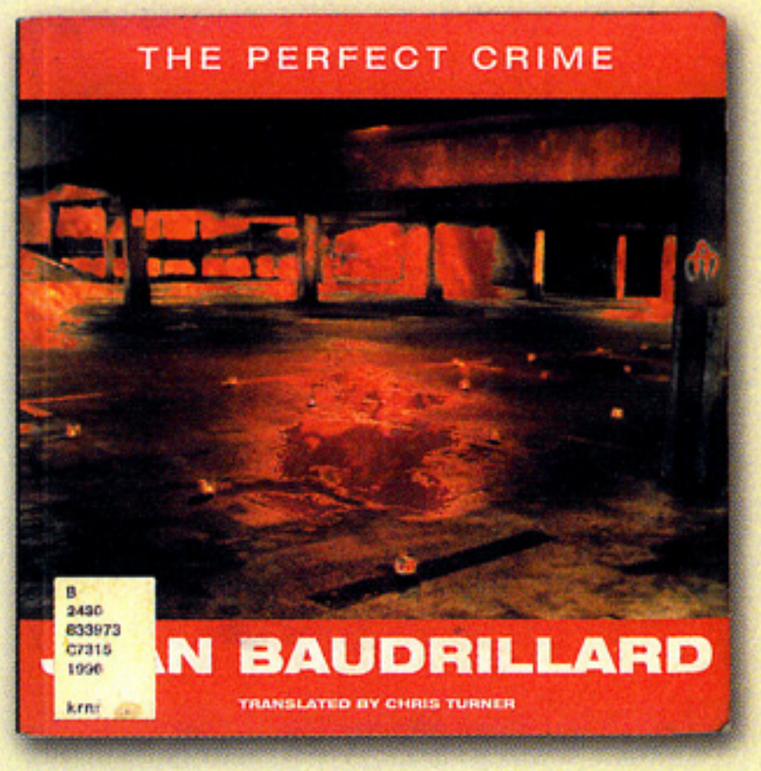

THE PERFECT CRIME
By: Jean Baudrillard
Published: 1995

A French philosopher finds that reality has disappeared — a theft "without criminal, without victim, and without motive." Only one trace remains of the world that may have been: the fact that it left behind so much nothingness. With that, our postmodern detective wades into the current psychopalypse, in which truth is "forever withdrawn," and any sense of self is going, going, gone.

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channels for one 24-hour period. I took my 2,400 hours of videotape home with me, and spent a year watching my snapshot of the Information Age. I had insights aplenty — new understandings of why we think about time the way we do, and geography, and history. But if you had to boil all those hours down to one central idea, the idea that comes blasting through our infoculture second after minute after hour after day, then that idea

YOU, SITTING THERE, REMOTES IN HAND, ARE THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE. AT FIRST BLUSH THIS SOUNDS NICE.

would be: you are the center of the universe. You, sitting there, remotes in hand, are the heaviest object in the known universe, around which all else should orbit.

Now, at first blush this sounds nice. Me, king of the world, customizing my own cell phone cover. In fact, we've bought the notion that this is "human nature," that we really are grasping creatures happiest when we're fulfilling our own selfish needs. This Bud's for you. Enjoy!

And of course there is a part of us that's like that. But in the long history of humanity, culture has worked to control those impulses, not nurture them. Culture has tried to put something else — the tribe, God, nature, some amalgam of these things — at the center. Why?

In part because it's needed to: most human societies have lived on the fine enough edge of survival that they couldn't tolerate the hyperindividual selfishness that defines our time. If some paleo-David Alpert a few million years ago had wanted 55 antelopes, there wouldn't have been enough for everyone else. Putting the tribe, or nature, or God at the center of your life places real limits on what you will do; those limits, those taboos, have been the stuff of culture since we swung down from the trees. Now, in the last 50 years, our shamans, known also as economists, tell us not to worry. The gods have changed their minds — the best way to make sure everyone gets enough is to take ever more for yourself. But the biologists and the physicists and indeed the weatherman are beginning to question their assurances.

But there's another reason for putting something other than yourself at the white-hot center of existence, a reason that's far more subversive even than the practical arguments. The one Achilles heel of the whole consumer empire — of the suburb and theme park and TV network and shopping mall — is that it doesn't make us quite as happy as it says it will. And that's because selfishness is only one part of our nature, and not the biggest part at that.

Consider this question: has anyone ever lain on their deathbed, reviewing the course of their life, and thought to themselves, "I sure wish I'd done a bit more

shopping?" No. The happiest times of our life mostly involve moments spent outside the consumer realm. Maybe it's time spent in the woods or in the mountains, face-to-face with something indisputably bigger than you. Or maybe it's time spent with someone you love. What is it about college that we enjoyed so much? Spending a lot of companionable hours with all sorts of other people. What are the peak moments of your life? Running a race with your lungs bursting, giving birth to a baby as cries of joy mix with cries of pain. Volunteering to help someone, changing the damn sheets in a church basement before the homeless men arrive to spend the night. I'm not arguing that we should do these things because they're morally superior. I'm arguing that when we do these things we find we like them more. We were built for something more than convenience and comfort. We're more interesting than that.

The forces of consumer society try to drown that knowledge out. When pure sell doesn't work, they teach us irony, they school us in cynicism. And their chanted spell gets louder each year, sings from more machines. It is possible that they will manage to irreversibly change our natures, or at least to raise successive generations who can't imagine anything different — I know that when I take kids backpacking in the woods, some of them still respond, and some are so freaked by the difference of it all that they can't take it in. I remember talking once with Ed Abbey, the great desert writer and father of all culture jammers. "If you give me a kid before the age of 16, I can make them fall in love with the wild places in a week," he said. "But after that the silence starts to scare them." The question may be, as individuals and as a society, whether we've passed that point of no return.

Our leaders would like us to think so. Before he went off to Rio de Janeiro for the 1992 Earth Summit, George Bush the Elder said that while he was willing to talk about the environment, "the American way of life is not negotiable." His successor, Bill Clinton, remarked famously that "it's the economy, stupid." Everything we see around us reinforces that message of inevitability: cars get larger each year, and homes too; the economy continues ceaselessly to expand; the margins of quiet and privacy shrink with each new supergadget to "tie us in."

And yet, more and more people are heeding the lessons of the fairy tales: if someone is putting you under a spell, you have to resist. In that, there is an outside chance. The enchantment is starting to break, the incantation beginning to weaken.

Bill McKibben is the author of The End of Nature, The Age of Missing Information, *and other books about the environment, the media, and our ways of life. His newest book,* Long Distance: A Year of Living Strenuously, *has just been published.*

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IS THE AMERICAN DREAM NEGOTIABLE?

Kono Matsu
>CREATIVE DIRECTOR

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t (604) 736-9401
e kono@adbusters.org

WITHOUT HOLLYWOOD AND THE
SHOPPING MALLS, THE SHELL-SHOCKED
WOULD [illegible] LIVE THE STREETS.

- IAN H. ANGUS
IN THE CULTURAL POLITICS
IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICA

PROMETHEUS
HOLY FIRE
IS IN MY
HANDS

Date: Wed, 1 Nov 2000
To: Kono Matsu <kono@adbusters.org>
From Gregory Scurf <gscurf@earthworks.org>
Subject: Renegotiating the American Dream

Dear Kono:

Was good to meet you last week in Portland. Forgot to tell you how glad I am Powershift has taken this on – I think you're the hottest shop around right now, and if anyone can pull this off, you can.

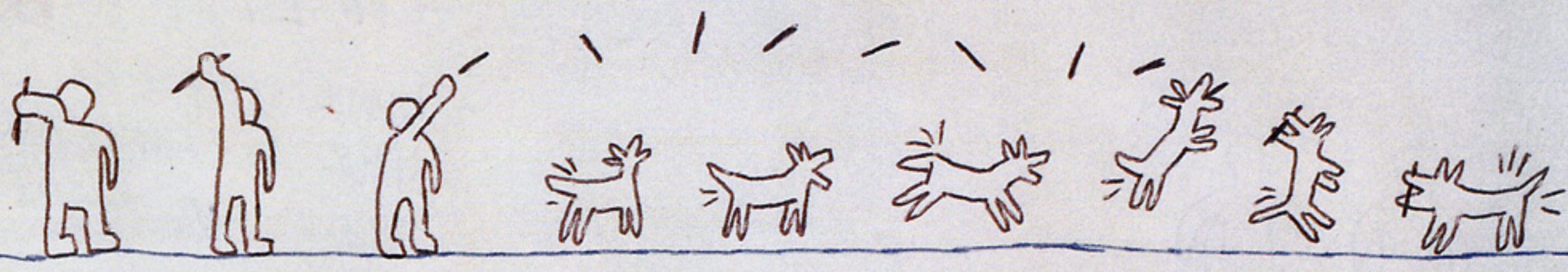
I hope you and I can play regular email ping-pong and keep tossing ideas around until they jell. As you know, this is the first global campaign of its kind ever attempted and the stakes are high. If we succeed, even marginally, others will follow. I hope that quarter-mil budget doesn't cramp your style... ever wish you were in product marketing instead. ;)

Here's how I see it: Emotion is the only way to go. I say let's shock them out of their consumer-drone stupor... let's go straight for the gut, and let the viscera fall where they may. 1

Softened by shock, maybe they'll be receptive to reason... and then, finally, to drive the point home, we may have to reach for the stick and go ad hominem. 2

I don't want to over stage-manage you (I know how tetchy you "creatives" can get about this). I'm really looking forward to working with you. P.S. Every November, my wife still talks about that animatronic pig spot you guys did for Buy Nothing Day. 3

Strength to your sword arm. Greg



Got it?

SHOCK

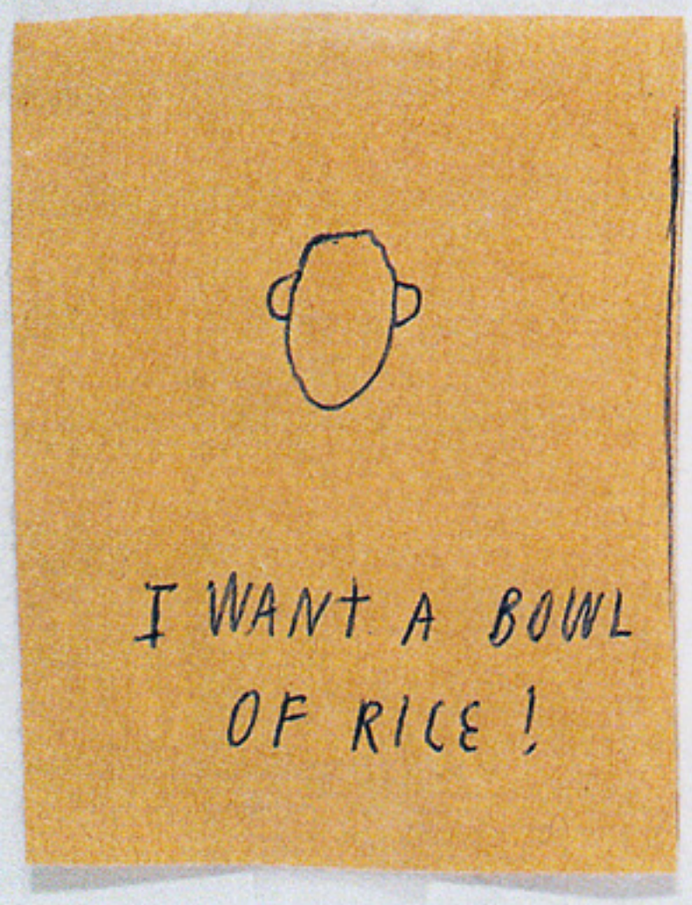
20 Y

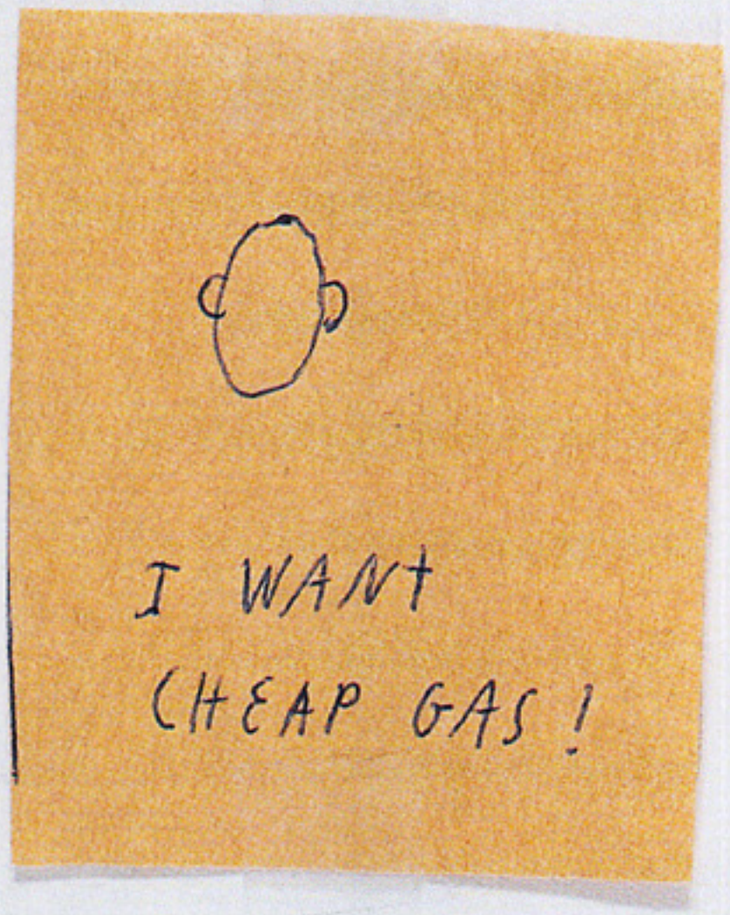
AUG Sept 16 2000

Millions Still Going Hungry In the U.S., Report Finds

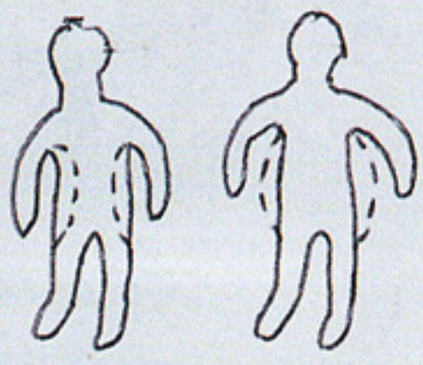
WASHINGTON, Sept. 9 (Reuters) — While fewer Americans are going hungry thanks to the country's booming economy, a federal report says that 31 million people grappled with hunger, or at least the fear of it, last year.

The annual report, released by the





. To break the negative feedback loop that fuels the current global *problematique*, it may be necessary to judiciously apply a stick or two of dynamite to some of the bedrock principles and systems of late 20th Century corporate capitalism.

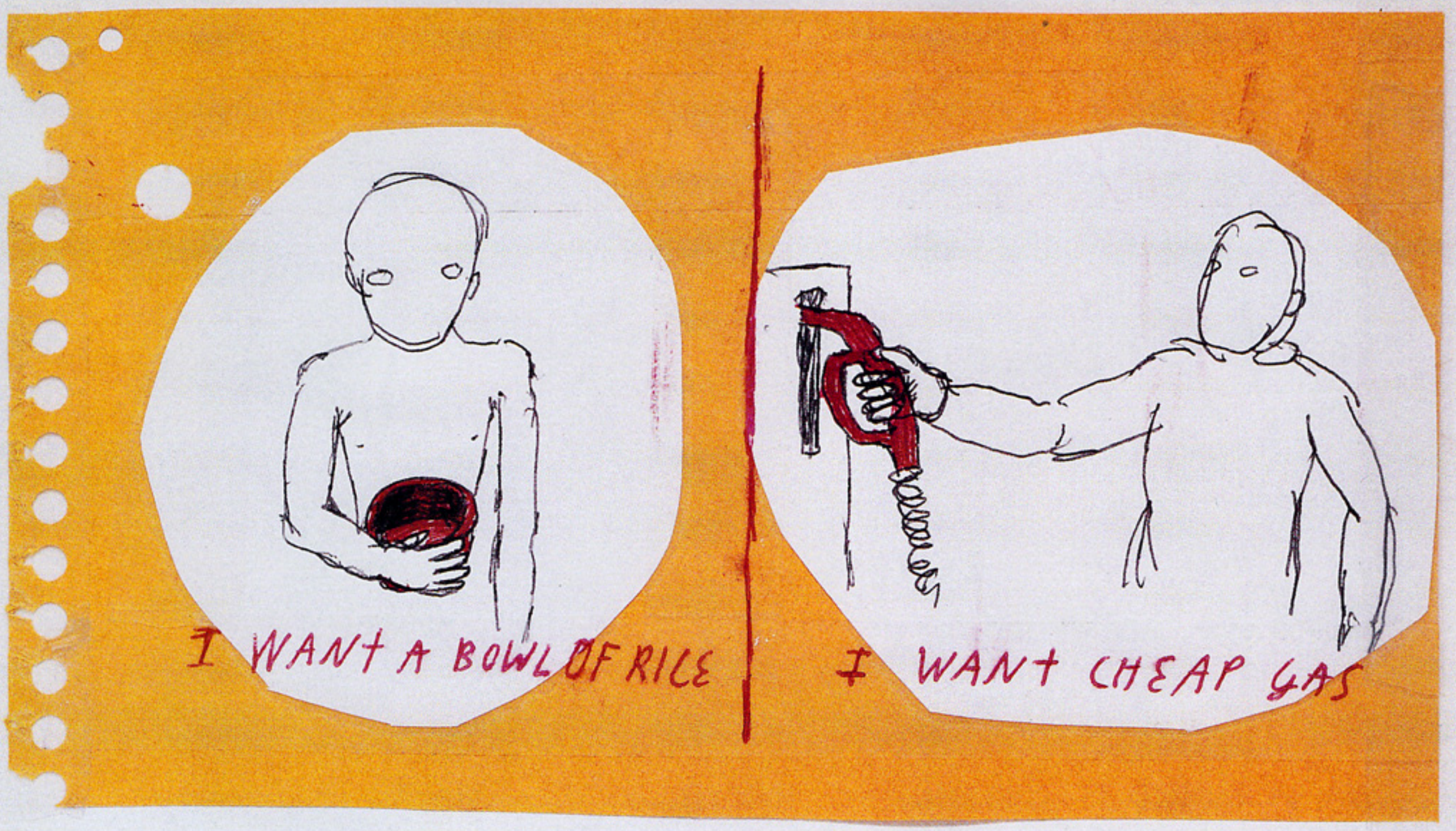


TONY SIX-PACK KNOWS WHERE YOU LIVE.

TONY SIX-PACK MAY BE SMARTER THAN U THINK.

I AM TONY SIX-PACK.

4



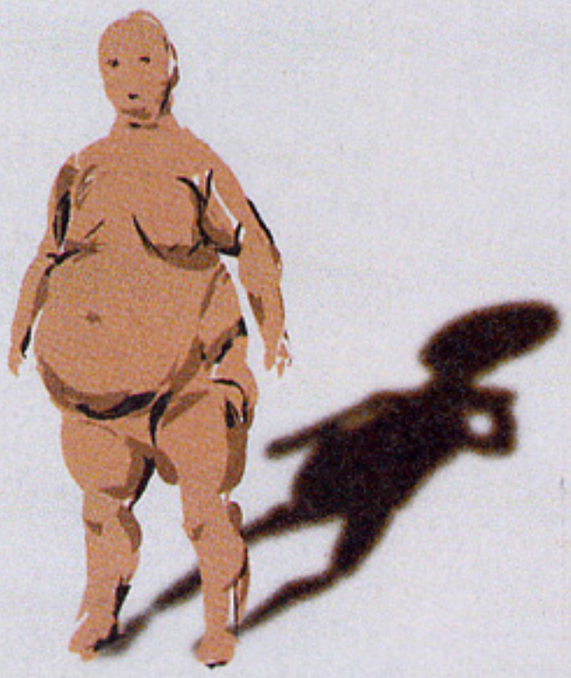
To: Kono Matsu <kono@adbusters.org>
From Gregory Scurf <gscurf@earthworks.org>
Subject: moral shock

Got the roughs you faxed. Hmm, sort of interesting – but not terribly shocking. I doubt people will make the connection between these two images. What's the link between crying for food and bitching about gas prices? You and I know, but does Tony six-pack know... or care? –Greg

1.2 BILLION UNDERNURISHED / 1.2 BILLION OVERNURISHED
— WORLDWATCH INSITUTE REPORT

www.worldwatch.org

1.2 BILLION PEOPLE ARE OVERNOURISHED
1.2 BILLION PEOPLE ARE UNDERNOURISHED
NO CONNECTION?



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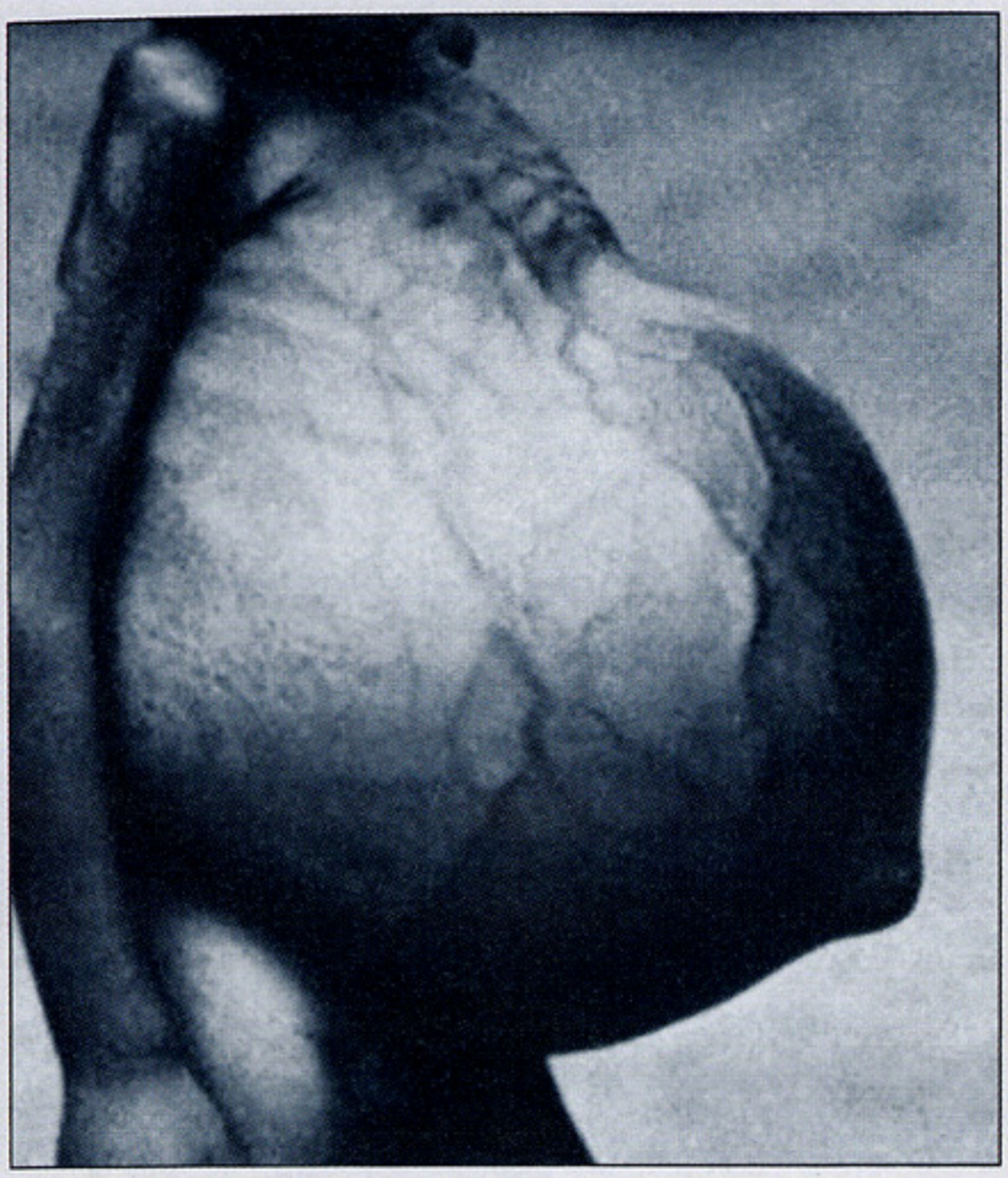
Jesus, Kono, you got me with this. I guess it *is* still possible to shock people. Big green light on this one. Poster, billboard? Do you think People or Cosmo would run it?



NO CONNECTION

One billion people are dying of starvation. Another billion are dying of excess. One group is the victim of its own corrupt politics and poor economic planning. The other is reaping its earned reward – the lion's share of the earth's bounty. We are not our brother's keeper. We live and die by our choices. This is the meaning of freedom.

ECO SHOCK

IT'S BEEN A DISMAL THOUSAND YEARS, ENVIRONMENTALLY SPEAKING. We cut down most of the earth's forests, drove most large carnivores to the brink of extinction, spread disruptive exotic species around the globe, manufactured poisons on a monumental scale, and set in motion a potentially catastrophic warming of the atmosphere.

Now, with the blank slate of a ne
us, we have a chance to get it right.

Seven out of ten biologists believe the world is now in the midst of the fastest mass extinction of living things in the 4.5 billion-year history of the planet, as many as half the species on Earth will die out

WORLD•WATCH September/October 1998

PANIC NOW

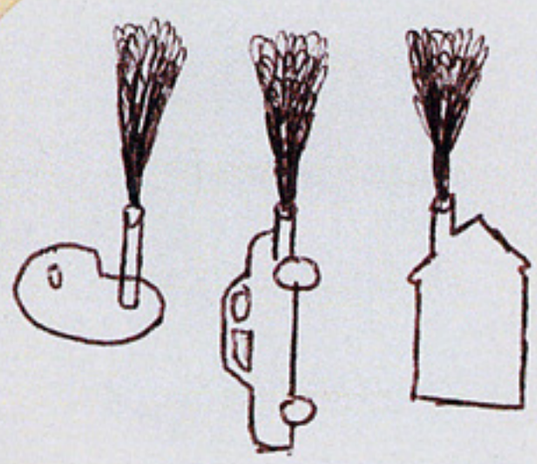
In the last 200 years the United States has lost:
50% of its wetlands
90% of its northwestern old-growth forests
99% of its tallgrass prairie and
up to 490 species of native plants and animals
with another **9,000 now at risk**[48]

we are driving toward a cliff, with our eyes closed. Half the world's rainforests have been logged and burned. Sixteen of the ocean's 17 major fisheries have collapsed. This has been done so 700 million from Europe, Japan, and the U.S. can enjoy industrialism.

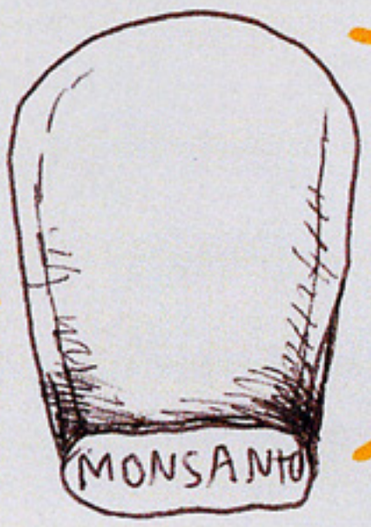
Forty years ago, Rachel Carson's Silent Spring showed us a world on the ecological brink. The shock spawned a movement...
Can we do it again?
-Greg

it seems that most of us are crossing
our fingers and simply hoping for the best.

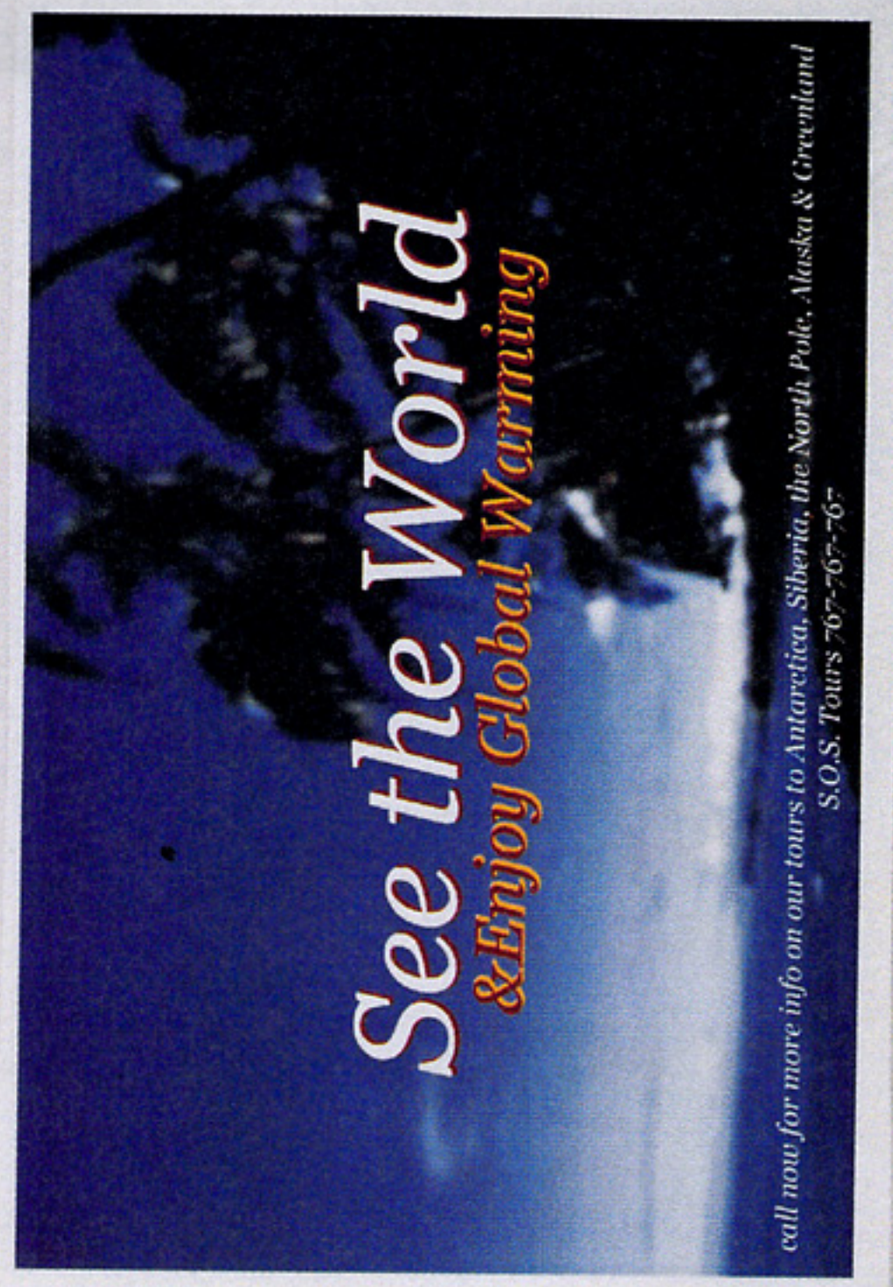
ECO SHOCK



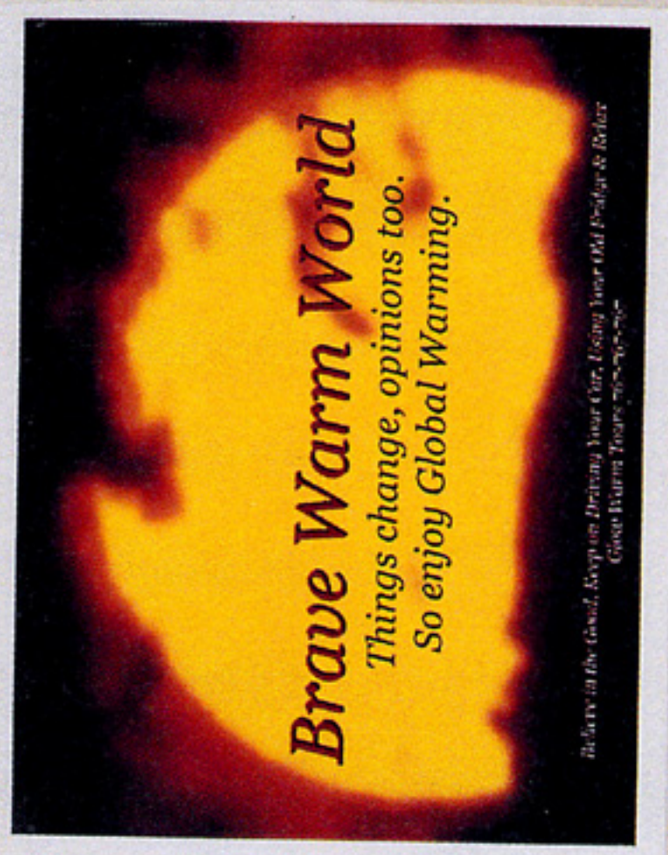
FRANKEN FOOD



CORN™



Kono, we seem to be going downhill from the distended bellies.
Becoming too cartoony. Abort! ...or at least rethink.
- Greg



There are other ways I could offer you to see the world, ways to make amends

I could show you ten thousand Caribou trailing restless through gray talus peaks, as timeless as the beginning of things

Or the sure way a Grizzly digs for ground squirrels, effortlessly reaching and scraping, and how his silver tipped back riffles in the wind

I could show you the speckled beauty of Snow Geese lifting and turning toward the sun, flashing black on white, black on white

Or a Wolverine's angry breath fogging a pale winter sky, nose held hard against the breeze, like an impatient old man coming home

These are things that could change you

First, though, you would have to learn another language, one our fathers have forgotten

— R. Glendon Brunk

SOUL SHOCK

Members since birth.

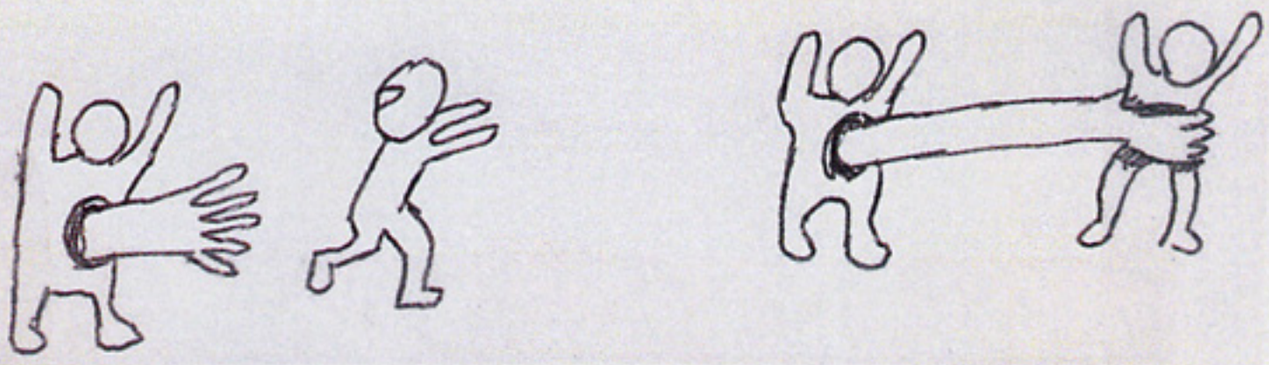
There's a lot of empty shells around today. At first sight they look like human beings, but go a bit closer and you'll see that they're not people but empty shells, with all the goodness inside eaten away.

STILL HAS POWER!

To: Kono Matsu <kono@adbusters.org>
From: Gregory Scurf <gscurf@earthworks.org>
Subject: soul shock

Kono, here's the next level of shock - beyond pictures of starving Eritreans or brave gimps poisoned by mercury. This is about the horrible, dawning realization that our emotions and core values have been manipulated. We've been mindfucked. A continuous product message now runs through our brains. Most of us live designer lives — sleep, eat, sit in car, work, shop, watch TV, sleep again. There's barely a spontaneous minute left anywhere in that cycle. This is about waking up one day, looking in the mirror and finding a UPC code branded on your forehead.

Kono, can you do anything with that? —Greg



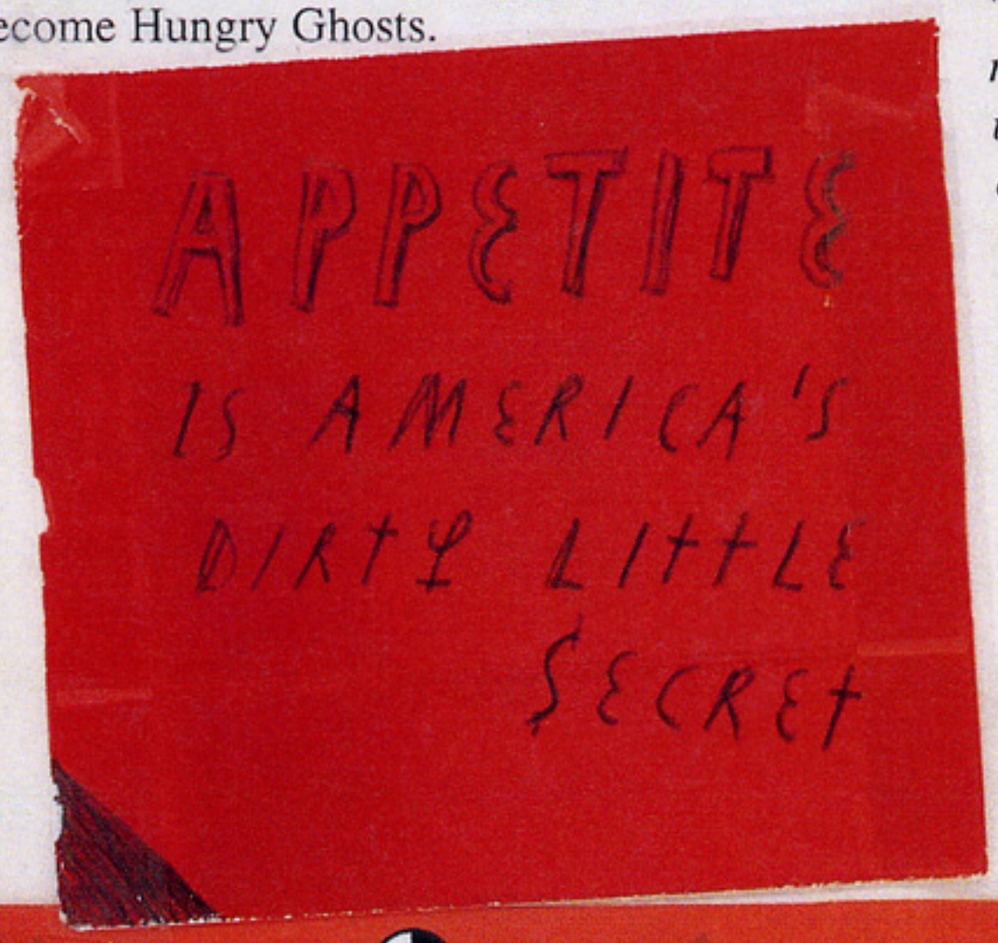
From: Jonathan Watts <jonaomi@ari.bekkoame.ne.jp>
To: Kono Matsu <kono@adbusters.org>
Subject: hello from Think Sangha

Dear Kono,

Yes, the "pretas," or hungry ghosts, are probably the most vivid drawn metaphors in the Buddhist Wheel of Life. They are phantom creatures with withered limbs, grossly bloated bellies and tiny mouths. They demand impossible satisfactions so they have stretched necks — hungry and demanding the impossible. They are searching for gratification for old unfulfilled needs whose time has passed. Their ghost-like state is representative of their attachment to the past.

The modern word for "preta" is "consumer."

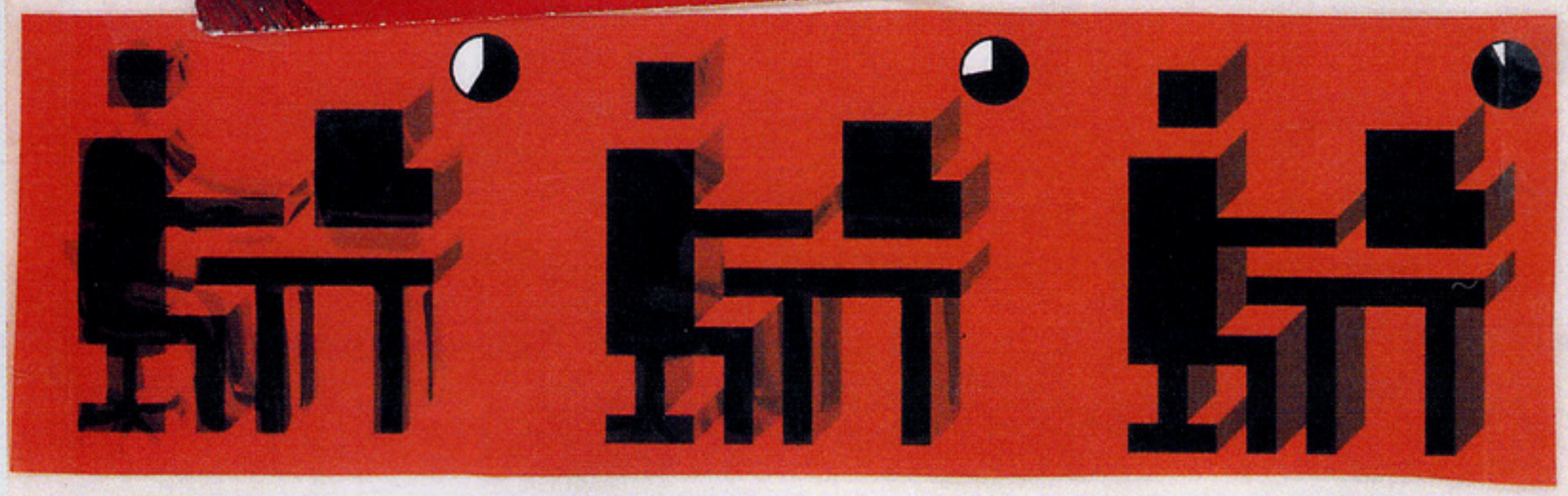
If you're interested, I'm sure we could find some more text for this and also find some great traditional Buddhist art of these creatures. One thing I've noticed here in Asia is that so many of the foreign tourists I see from the West have huge bellies and mid-sections, skinny little necks and skinny legs. We truly have become Hungry Ghosts.



"When we compare human with animal desire we find many extraordinary differences. The animal tends to eat with his stomach, and the man with his brain. When the animal's stomach is full, he stops eating, but the main is never sure when to stop. When he has eaten as much as his belly can take, he still feels empty, he still feels an urge for further gratification.

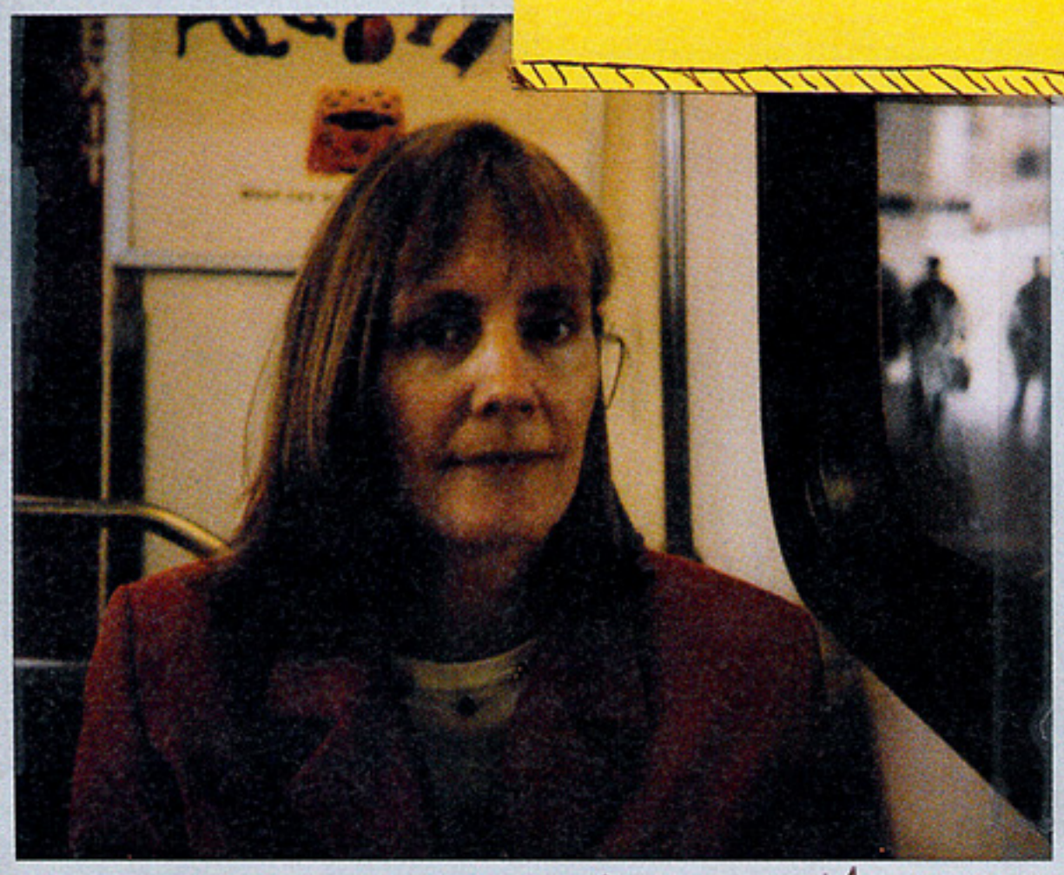
The brain conceives of happiness as the guarantee of an indefinitely long future of pleasures. The economy designed to produce this happiness is a fantastic vicious circle which must either manufacture more and more pleasures or collapse."

-Allan Watts, The Wisdom of Insecurity



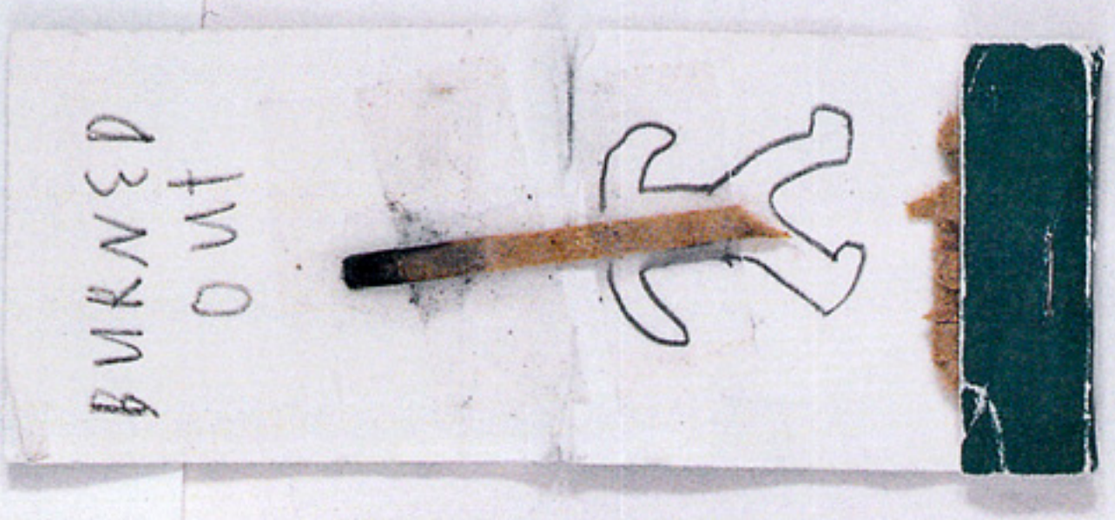
Percentage of American workers who report feeling "used up" by the end of the workday: **42%**[35]

ARE YOU A HUNGRY GHOST?

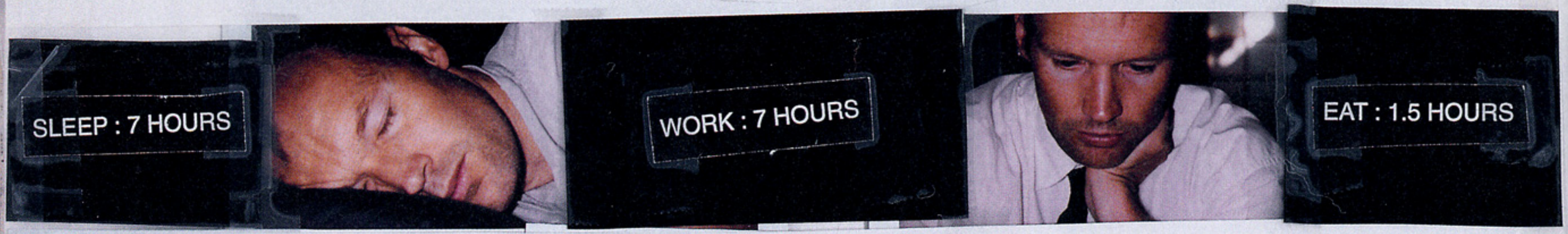


TOO YELLOW

Percentage of Americans who would like to "slow down and live a more relaxed life": **69%**

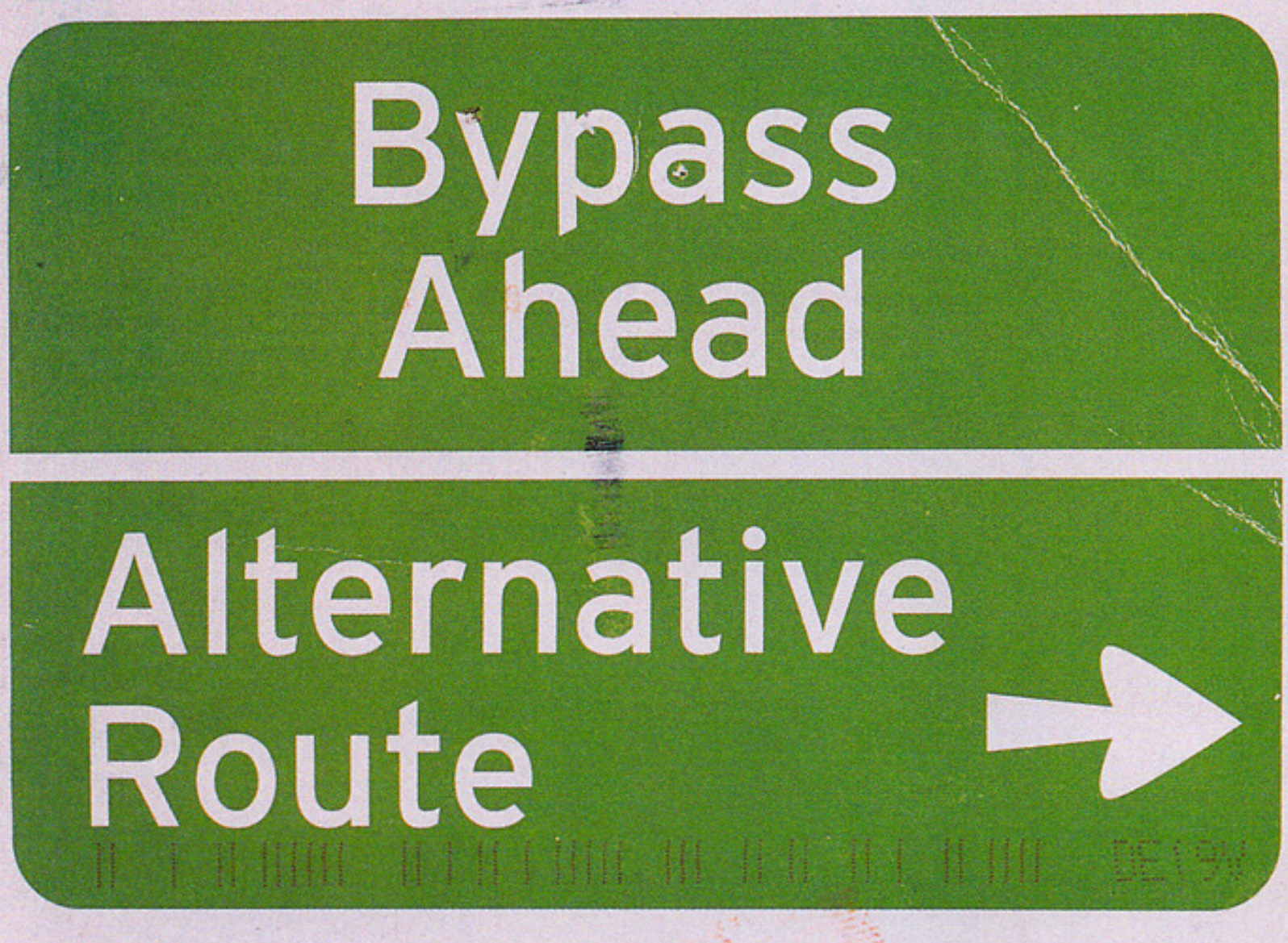


YOUR DESIGNER DAY 30 sec TV spot



Kono,

Now move forward. Bring on the brain. Bring on rational argument, common sense. We need a watertight case for a wholesale rethinking of the American way of life. I've sent you some clippings by snail mail. - Cheers, Greg



Engineering a Green Revolution

For too long, we've believed that the shift to a sustainable society just might come down to storming parliaments and tossing Molotov cocktails. Maybe, though, the next revolutionary model is closer to Silicon Valley, circa 1950. That was when Stanford University began leasing 8,000 acres of land as a high-tech park, hoping to create "a community of technical scholars."

Who will do the same for a green revolution? What university or city will create a community of green technologists and innovators? Put another way, the decision seems easy to make. Where would you rather live 50 years from now: in the place that suffers the environmental declines and has to buy the fixes, or the place that halts the declines and has fixes for sale?

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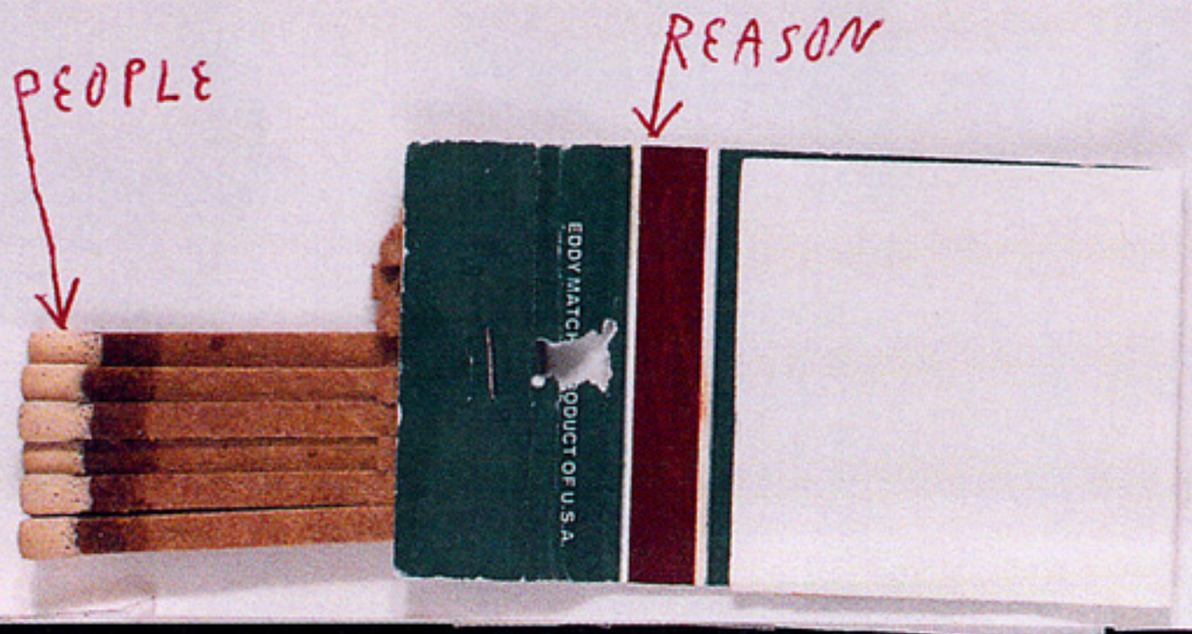


An Ounce of Precaution

BY THOMAS C. TRENBETH

In 1998 in Racine, Wisconsin, 32 environmental leaders signed a statement calling for a more careful approach to our interaction with our environment. "When an activity raises threats of harm to the environment or human health, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause-and-effect relationships are not fully established scientifically."

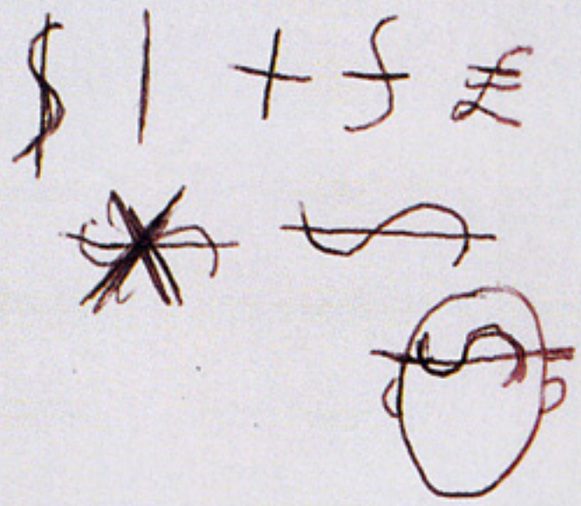
The force of the precautionary principle sinks in once you realize that the number of growing global crises that have no decided "cause" include cancers, learning disorders, depression, asthma, climate change, and the extinction of frogs. Up to now, a kind of reverse precautionary principle has been in place — a technology or behavior that may threaten, for example, the ozone layer, is sheltered from regulation until near-total scientific consensus proves the harm. As a more extreme example, consider that biotechnology firms now argue that any requirement to label genetically modified foods would expose them to irrational consumer concern.

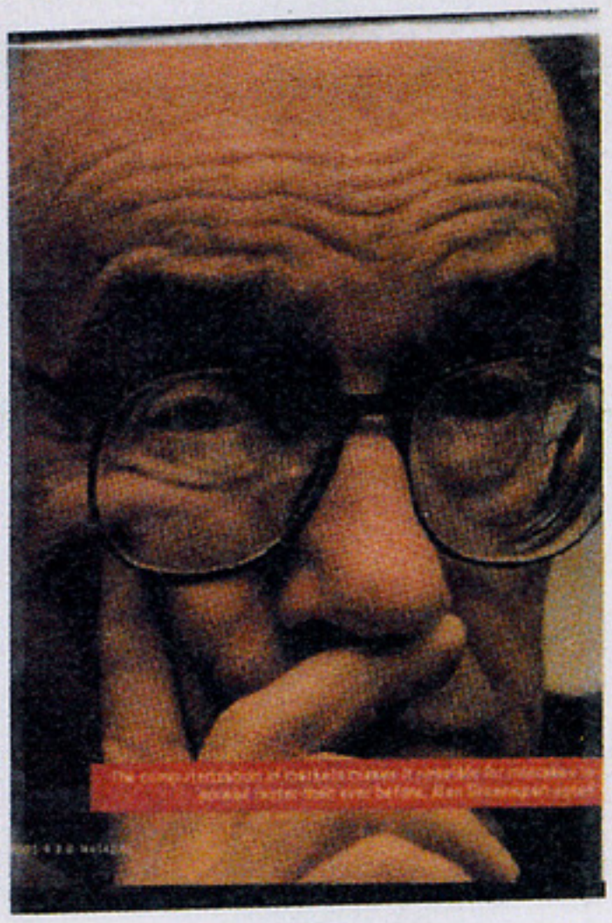
To some, the precautionary principle is a radical attack on the freedom to innovate. But then, it has just as often been compared to "good household management." ●

banking problems." Many of these downturns affected so-called "third generation" economies; one study of 26 banking crises, for example, revealed that 18 were preceded by financial sector liberalization within a five-year interval.

It is in this context that we should understand the renewed interest in an international tax on foreign exchange transactions. The concept was first proposed in 1978 by Nobel laureate and Yale economist James Tobin, hence the colloquial reference to "Tobin taxes." Formulas for these taxes vary widely, but a typical model would apply a simple sales tax of 0.05 to 0.01 percent on volume (approximate worldwide total volume: $1.7 billion). Tobin tax proponents do not expect to significantly impact long-term currency investment; indeed, 90 percent of daily currency trading is considered speculative. In the case of certain currencies, this "short run" exchange market has proved manipulable even by individual traders.

An increasing number of international political leaders appear convinced that some form of Tobin tax would prove a valuable disincentive to "short run" trading, in effect "cooling" volatile currency markets. Internationalists in particular are attracted to the possibility of multinational coordination on a tax that, by conservative estimates, would generate up to $200 billion per annum (note that the United Nations estimates the cost of universal global access to basic social services at $40 billion per annum). Perhaps





ALAN GREENSPAN

MUST LERN TO SUBTRACT

Kono, I like Greenspan. He's the perfect way to sell abstract ideas like true cost pricing. I'd love to see his mug in the Times, right on the heels of Friedman and Krugman. A full page in the Sunday edition would cost $50,000 plus, so we'll probably have to settle for a quarter page until others come on board.... can you do a 1/4 page mockup? And can you find a shot of the man that makes him look a little less like Neil Simon? – Greg

Evaluating the True-Cost Market Model

"In the global marketplace of the future, the price of every product will tell the ecological truth." We opened our sustainability debate with this powerful meme, and were surprised by its appeal across the political spectrum. A "true-cost marketplace" is a powerful tool to help consumers understand the consequences of their choices, but can also be seen as crucial correction to free market theory.

We discussed the most obvious example: the car. Working with rough estimates, we began calculating the ecological costs of all pollution and waste associated with the production, use and disposal of our automobiles, from tailpipe pollution to military protection for pipelines. The initial cost of a car, we decided, would be at least $100,000 US, with $250 for every tank of gas - not the kind of price jump we could put in place tomorrow.

When we talked about 20-year phase-in, however, we were astounded by the catalyst that true cost could represent. The idea might be introduced with a "tax shift" that would pay a rebate on the "cleanest" cars through an ecological tax on the least efficient vehicles. As the real cost of personal hypermobility sank in, it would call into question the design of our cities, transportation systems, and the vehicles themselves. Obviously, true cost points to a rapid technological evolution towards car-free inner cities, effective public transit, solar and hybrid vehicles, and radically different urban planning.

The leading argument against a true-cost marketplace is the fact that it's easy to measure the value of oil, but much harder to know the real cost of an oil spill. We know one thing for sure, though: the cost isn't equal to zero.

The New York Times

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ALAN GREENSPAN MUST LEARN TO SUBTRACT

Someone's playing games with the national accounts. His name is Alan Greenspan, the man in charge of the Federal Reserve. When a forest is cut down in America, Mr. Greenspan adds up the jobs and profits. Every car accident is a positive for the economy. Every cancer treatment, every toxic clean-up, counts as another uptick in the GDP. He just can't see that we're losing something, too.

The land, air and water are our inheritance, and future. They're being depleted. Through ten years of unprecedented prosperity, we've been breaking the first law of economics: you can't keep selling off your capital and calling it income.

Let's send Alan Greenspan, and the rest of the America's economic policy-makers, back to school. It's time they learned to subtract.

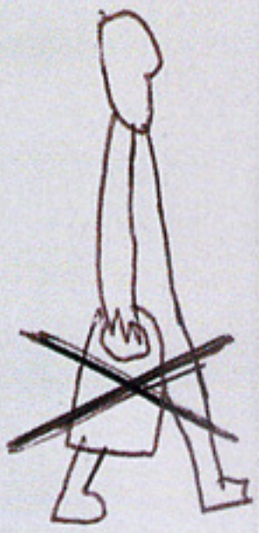
<www.culturejammers.org>

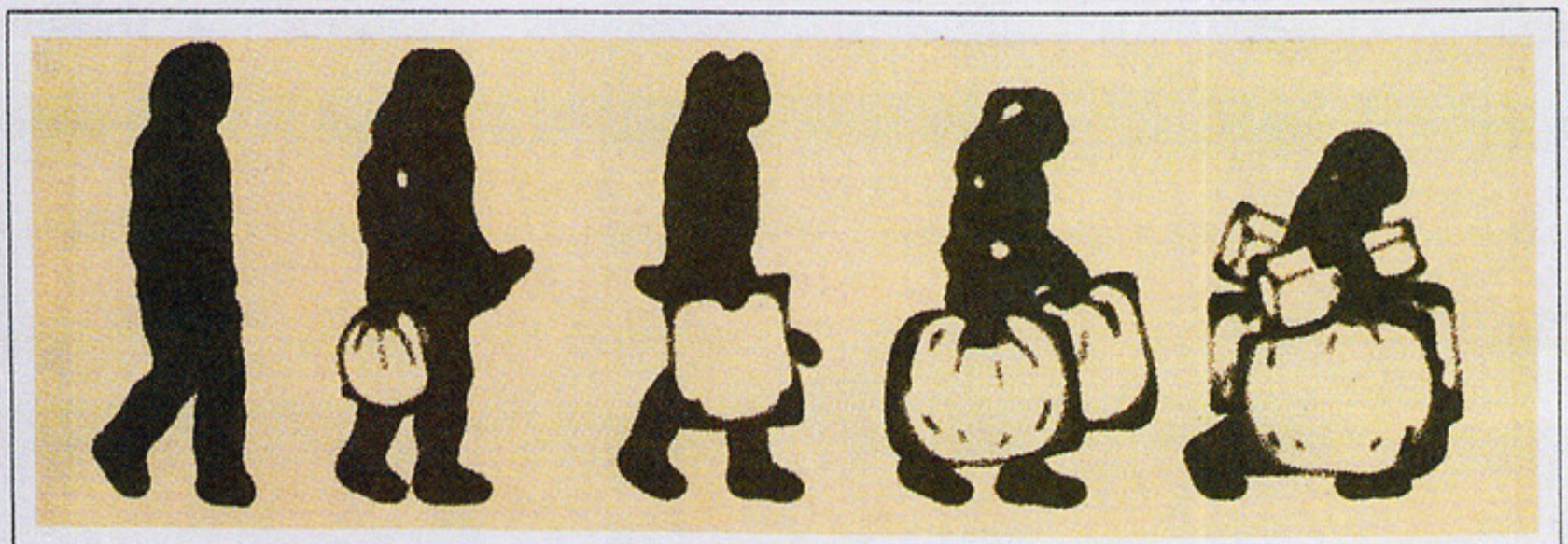
THE STICK

d no cultural revolution has ever happened without the stick.

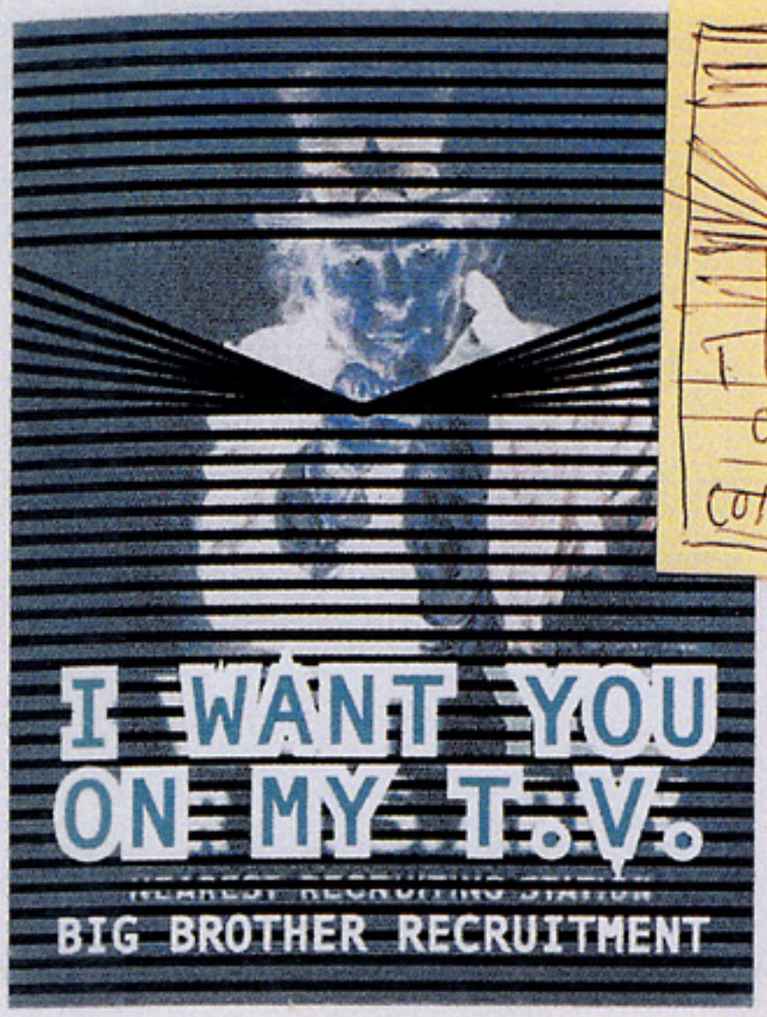
Kono San,

In this final phase, our job - *your* job - is to legitimize the idea of resistance. You've got to paint it as the next, inevitable step. I guess post-WTO style activism is the real stick now, but it's up to you to elevate the concept. Go wider with it. This isn't about knocking out the window of some Starbucks or Nike store in Seattle. It's about taking the stick to America itself, and turning consumers into politically active citizens.



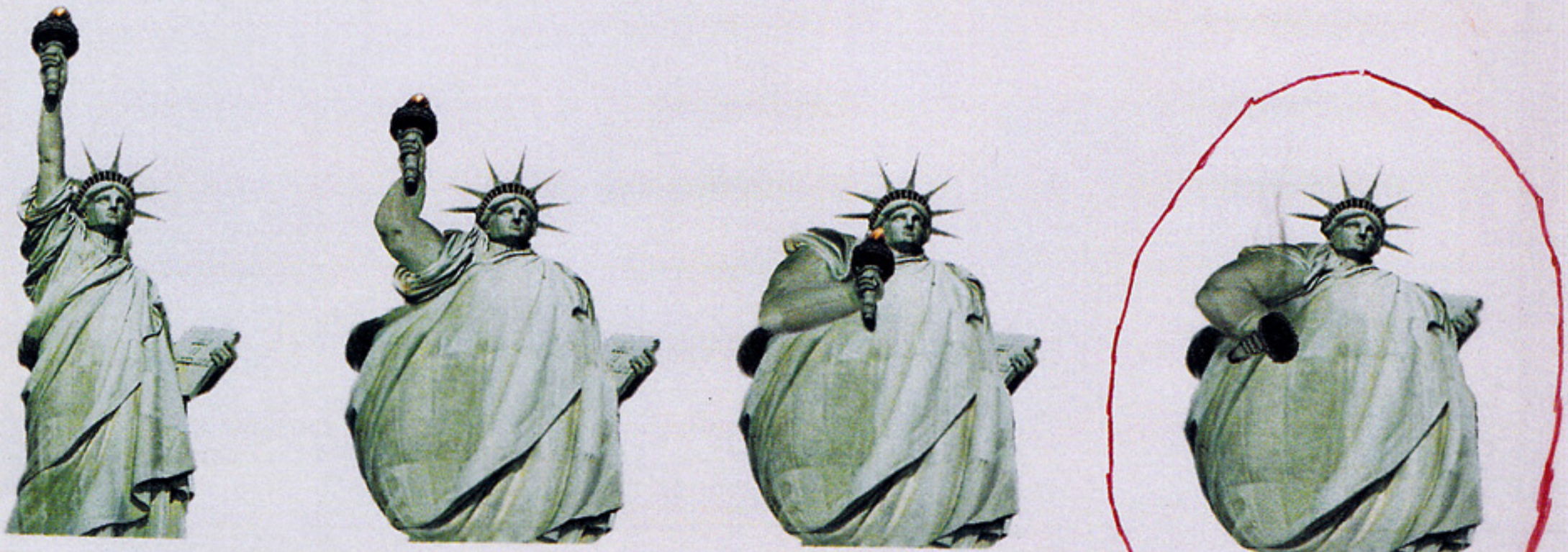


The BUYOLOGICAL URGE



LIKE A HEROIN ADDICT, AMERICA WILL DO ANYTHING TO KEEP GETTING ITS FIX

Percentage of the world's population comprised of Americans: **5**
Percentage of the world's resources consumed by Americans: **30**



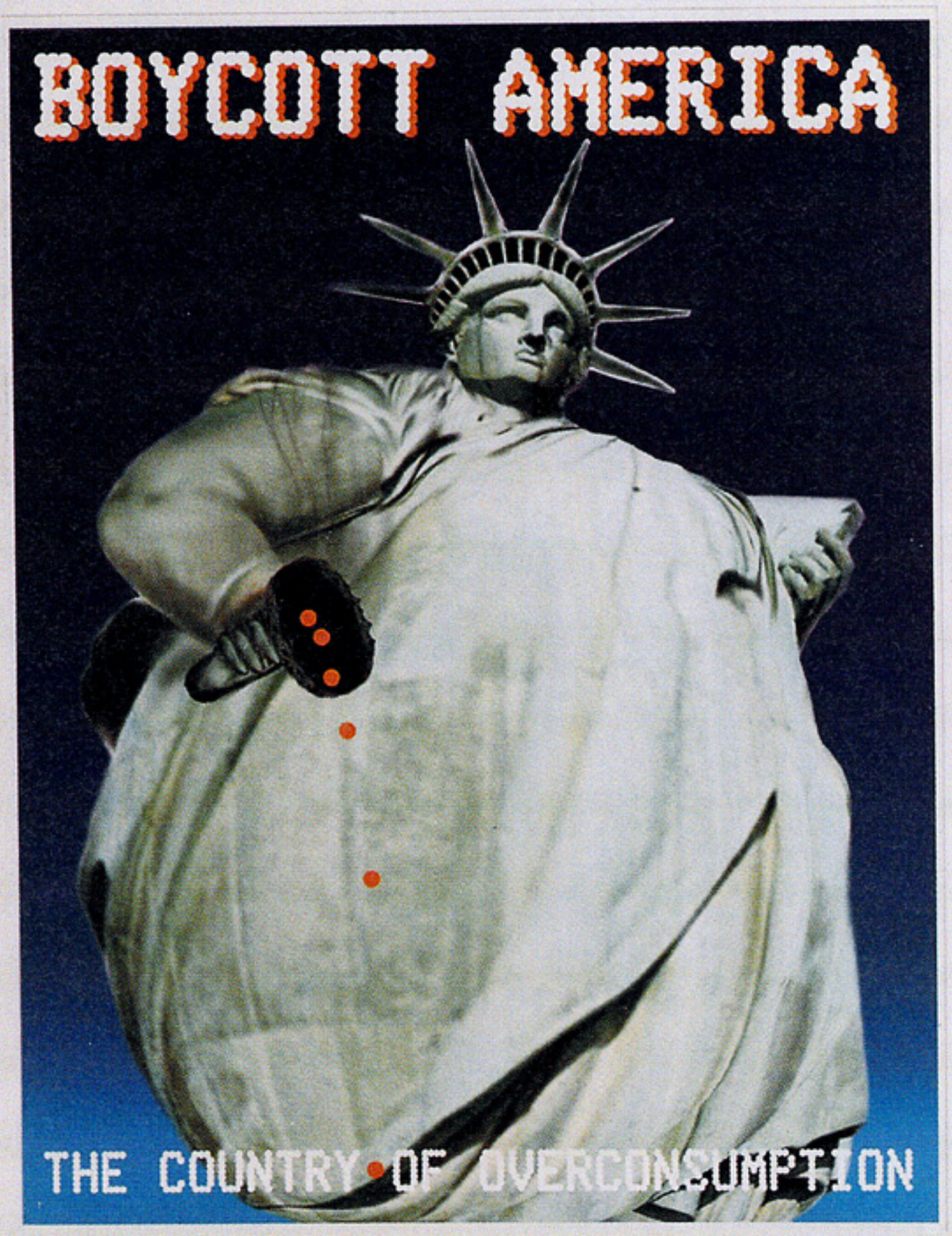
Kono,

Works for me. Now, as Ross Perot used to say, Let's see if the dog eats the dog food.

To recap: The battling bellies ("No Connection") is a go, tho still have to decide in what form to deploy it. (A poster? An ad in Harpers... or People? A digital gif people can download off the website and fire at any likely target?) The Greenspan ad is also a go. A donor friend is interested: we may eventually go full page. "Buyological Urge" will make a bomber sticker.

Re: Boycott America. Great meme, but slogan and image are not resonating. Ideally, we'd ping-pong on this one more time and come up with a happy synthesis. Unfortunately, that's not going to happen, because... I was let go this morning. A guy named Simon, who looks about 15 but has somehow won the trust of the big cheese, will be taking over my files. I wish it were a joke.

Bon courage Kono San. Keep carrying the lantern high, Greg.

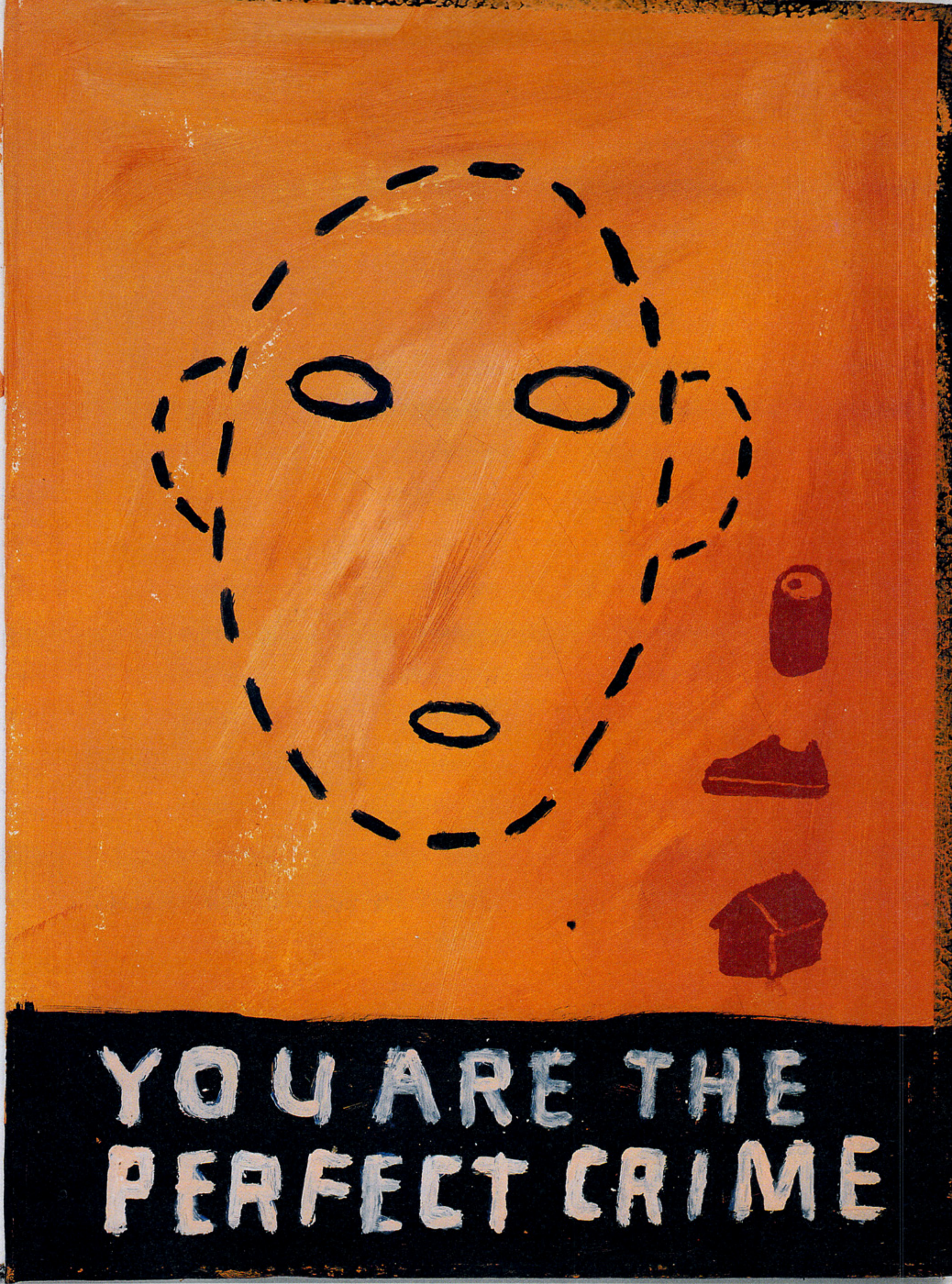


culturejammers.org

indymedia.org

protest.net

half of Americans polled in a recent survey said they couldn't find Kosovo on a map, some 55 per cent are in favour of bombing the place.


YOU ARE THE
PERFECT CRIME

"The rebellion, when it begins in the 21st century, will be unfamiliar. It will not be Marxist or Communist, and will have only an indirect ancestry in socialism. It will be in some sense for equality and against privilege. But my guess is that it will not talk the language of majorities and will instead be a guerrilla struggle conducted by inchoate, unstructured groups of highly qualified people who can disrupt institutions, corporations, communications, even cities. These groups will form coalitions, and will sometimes seek to enlist the excluded victims of the system."

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YUGOSLAVIA PHOTO: AFP PHOTO/EPA/SRDJAN SUKI REICHSTAG PHOTO: HULTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION/CORBIS

THIS SERBIAN OPPOSITION SUPPORTER IN FRONT OF THE YUGOSLAV PARLIAMENT BUILDING SEEMS TO BE RE-ENACTING YEVGENY KHALDEI'S PHOTO (RIGHT) OF A SOVIET SOLDIER CELEBRATING VICTORY ATOP THE REICHSTAG IN 1945. AND IN A WAY, HE IS.

The First Global Revolution

In Yugoslavia's classic revolution, lessons for the fight against a faceless, shifting foe

A wave runs into a wall, and dissipates. There follows another, slightly bigger wave, and this one shakes the wall. Eventually comes a wave so big it hits the wall and rolls right over.

Within the last decade, the world has watched one revolution after another crush the political regimes in Romania, Indonesia, the Philippines, Peru and Zimbabwe. Last month, Yugoslavia became the latest country to play out a narrative so consistent in its details it might be best thought of as a myth.

Substitute almost any country born (or re-born) of revolution, and the news reports out of Belgrade in October would still be accurate. The people muster the will to oppose the leader, but the leader refuses to give up power. The people start spontaneously gathering in protest. One day they show up at the parliament buildings in unprecedented numbers. They sense their historic moment has arrived. To keep order, the police step up their use of force, but, significantly, they do not shoot to kill. The crowd senses the tidal shift: the president no longer has control of his army. Someone squirts through the barricade around the parliament and then the emboldened crowd surges through. A small group breaks into the sanctum sanctorum, the president's office, where perhaps they find the smoking gun — reams of doctored ballots with the president's name circled. Because it's symbolic, and because it's cathartic, they trash the place. They tear pictures from the wall and toss them out of broken windows. They sip the former leader's plum brandy. They put their feet up on the furniture as smoke from the burning building thickens in the sky over the city. And the defeated tyrant slips out of town — if he's lucky.

The global resistance movement, the growing body of citizens opposed to the corporate oligarchy, is finding a hopeful message in what has happened in Yugoslavia and elsewhere. While these events were specifically regional and political (in Yugoslavia, the Serbs were merely enforcing the results of an uncontested vote), they followed the template. They told the story. It's the story of the power shift. Those who had it lose it, those who yearned for it, gain it. Something dies, something new appears in its place. And the ideology of the slain tyrant is buried along with his bones.

The biggest hurdle to the new global revolution may prove to be a philosophical one. The new "tyrant" has no name and no face; he cannot be burned in effigy or tracked down where he lives. The required leap of imagination is to conceive of him as a million-component hologram who can only be deposed by personal commitment on the part of every revolutionary who has gathered in the virtual "public square." In this way, he is much more formidable, but no less vulnerable. And the revolutionaries' job requires not so much courage as consensus.

— *Harry Flood*

PHOTO: AFP PHOTO/FRANCK FIFE

THE STRAIGHT STORY: IN SEPTEMBER, FARMERS CLOGGED THE HIGHWAY EN MASSE WITH THEIR TRACTORS NEAR STRASBOURG, FRANCE TO PROTEST HIGH FUEL PRICES. THE PREVIOUS DAY, FRENCH FISHERMEN WHO HAD BLOCKED THE COUNTRY'S PORTS WERE GRANTED CONCESSIONS.

The Oil Squeeze Protests

THE DEMAND: Cheap gas.

WHERE: Throughout developed world.

WHO TOOK THE STREETS?: Thousands of militant truckers, taxi drivers, farmers, and gas-guzzling drivers.

HOT TACTIC: Illegal blockades.

PUBLIC REACTION: Hundreds of millions of global citizens agree: "Fair play on fuel!"

STRATEGIC ANALYSIS: Oil companies coordinate to slow production, aiming to lift per-barrel profits. First World consumers, convinced that cheap fuel is a kind of fundamental right, call for lower taxes on oil and gas. In other words, private fuel users want to pay even less into the government accounts that already subsidize the costs of pollution, climate change, habitat loss, car accidents, road construction, urban sprawl, and future generations' search for some way to replace the world's vanishing oil reserves.

HIGH POINT: An isolated German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder digs in against the companies, urging a price-fixing probe. "I can smell agreements being made," he says.

LOW POINT: A United Nations official declares that the public backlash against oil taxes has jeopardized the battle for clean air and sustainable energy.

WINNERS AND LOSERS: OPEC agrees to increase production, provided fuel prices stay high (winner). Consumers support corporate power against government, and will pay high rates for fuel regardless (loser). The environmental and health costs of drivers and other major oil users will have to be subsidized even further by the people who use the least oil — like cyclists and most of the world's poor (losers).

UNEXPECTED UPSIDE: Many people in oil-short cities realize that life without cars is, well, pleasant. They walk, ride bikes, meet in the streets. In Paris, the sound of songbirds is louder than traffic for the first time in memory.

PHOTO: PETER MATTHEWS/BLACKSTAR

THAT '68 FEELING... PROTESTERS IN DOWNTOWN PRAGUE MAKE A RUN TOWARD POLICE LINES DURING THE IMF - WORLD BANK MEETING IN SEPTEMBER. DEMONSTRATION CROWDS WERE ESTIMATED AT 5,000.

The Corporate Rule Protest

THE DEMAND: Post-capitalist democracy.

WHERE: Prague, Czechoslovakia.

WHO TOOK THE STREETS?: 5,000 political activists, primarily from Europe.

HOT TACTIC: Illegal blockades.

PUBLIC REACTION: Hundreds of millions of global citizens ignore the whole event.

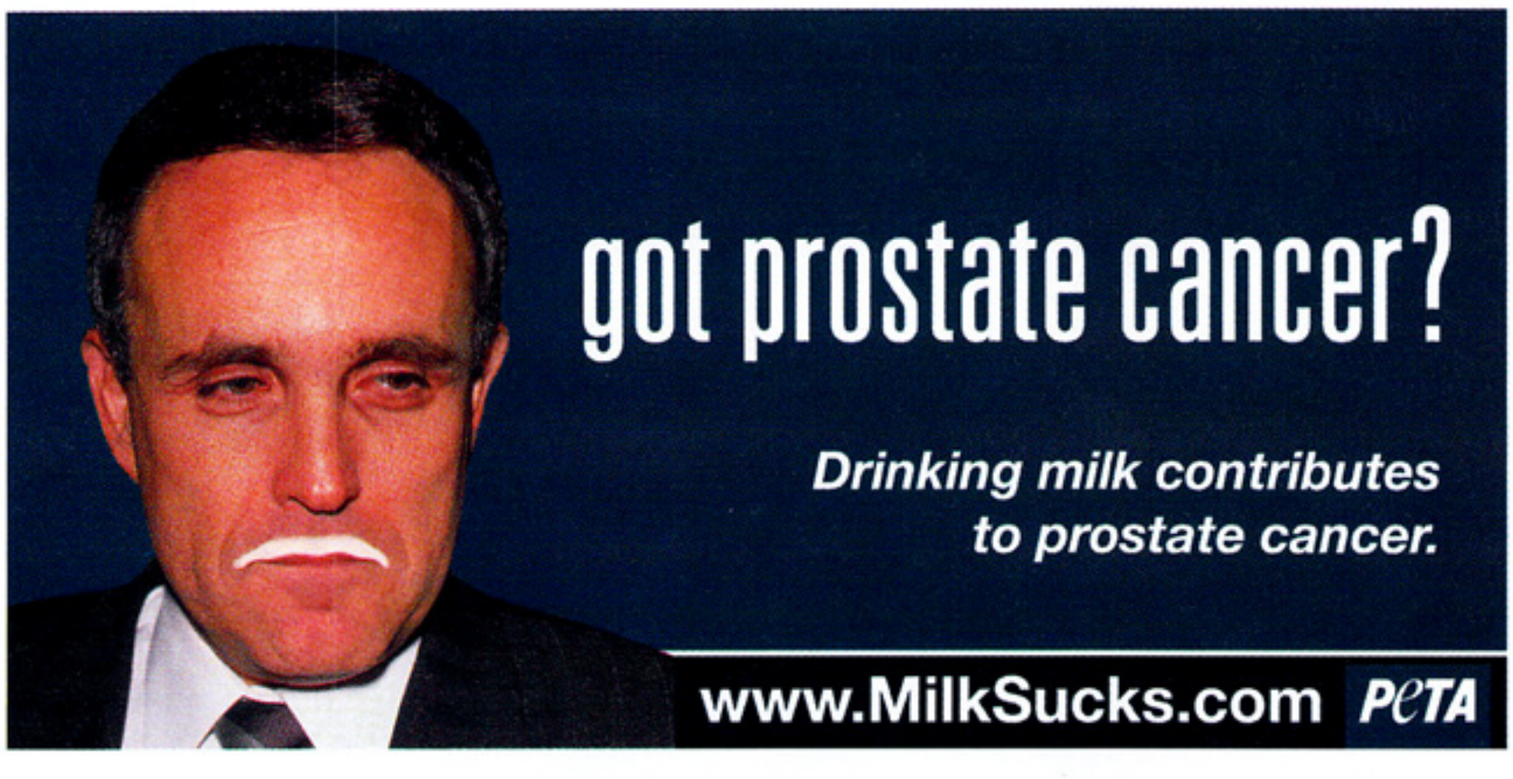
STRATEGIC ANALYSIS: The slogan — "London, Seattle, continue the battle!" — takes on a note of desperation. Numbers on the street are far fewer than even conservative forecasts. Still, the IMF/World Bank is clearly shaken by the emerging anti-capitalist radicalism, launching a major campaign to recast themselves not as global loan sharks, but as caring aid agencies for the world's poor.

HIGH POINT: World Bank president James Wolfensohn admits, "We live in a world scarred by inequality. Something is wrong when the richest 20 percent of the global population receive more than 80 percent of the global income."

LOW POINT: The IMF/World Bank reject a Canadian proposal for a moratorium on debt repayment by the world's poorest nations.

WINNERS AND LOSERS: In just one year, the global anti-capitalist movement has altered at least the rhetoric of globalization. From the turnout and low media attention, though, corporate capital must be thinking this is a waiting game they can win (winner). And of course, the indebted poor nations saw the proposed repayment moratorium vanish, then watched a $100-billion US debt-reduction commitment shrink to $35 billion (losers).

UNEXPECTED UPSIDE: However you feel about street battles, it was hard not to be moved by reports that anarchists from Greece and Turkey — nations bitterly at odds for millennia — stood together at one barricade.



GOT ETHICS?

Subvertisers, like advertisers, are no strangers to bad taste. The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), notorious for pushing the line in their jams, crashed over it with this summer's milk spoof featuring New York mayor Rudy Giuliani. In their effort to treat animals ethically, PETA failed to pay the same respect to Giuliani. After receiving hundreds of complaints from across the political spectrum – activists to grannies to the mayor himself – PETA pulled the ad and apologized. It was the right response to a lapse of judgment.

Holy Jammers!

Can you save your soul on the stock market? Finance a good deed instead of a hostile takeover? There's a new stock option on the Rio de Janeiro exchange which provides an alternative to lining your pockets.

The Brazilian Catholic church is offering $604 million in stock in one of its organizations, the Banco da Providencia (Providence Bank). The institution needs the money to finance its programs for orphans, alcoholics, and ex-convicts in Rio.

It boils down to a donation. Instead of traditional dividend payments, investors will receive "social dividends" — detailed reports on the charitable projects they finance. The church believes this packaging will attract the attention of those with money to invest, and will en-courage them to see their donation as an investment in society.

"I strongly support this as a new model," said Terry Mollner, a trustee of Calvert Group, a socially responsible investment company. "It suggests that financial return is not the only thing to be concerned about in making an investment."

The Bible says it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to squeeze through those pearly gates. Maybe the Catholic church is implying that a few wise investments could prop open the door a little.

— *Eliza Strickland*

COMEUPPANCE

In our ongoing series of tributes to folks who tried to outrun karma, the prize this month goes to the Taco Bell Chihuahua.

Okay, so it's not really the dog's fault that food affiliated with its master is under investigation by the US Environmental Protection Agency and the Food and Drug Administration, after it was found to contain a type of bio-engineered corn unlicensed for human consumption. The corn, called Starlink — made from corn and cotton seeds spliced with a plant pesticide — is approved only for use in animal feed. It contains a protein called Cry9C that's hard for humans to digest, and may be an allergen. The gene-spliced corn was discovered in taco shells sold under the Taco Bell name in a grocery store in suburban Washington, DC. The Biotechnology Industry Organization says it has no idea how the Cry9C might have slipped in there, acknowledging it "should not be in the human food chain." (The shells have since been pulled from supermarket shelves.) In an ostensibly reassuring press release, Taco Bell said its restaurant taco shells are "a different product than the supermarket shells recently recalled by Kraft and Safeway."

CHIHUAHUA IMAGE: WWW.MAHARI.COM

Many observers feel the Chihuahua is taking the fall for the FDA's slack regulation of bio-engineered food.

At press time, the dog was vacationing in Mazatlan with a Mexican Hairless, and unavailable for comment.

— *Bruce Grierson*

Losing Their Marbles

Ad agencies celebrate a year of targeting kids

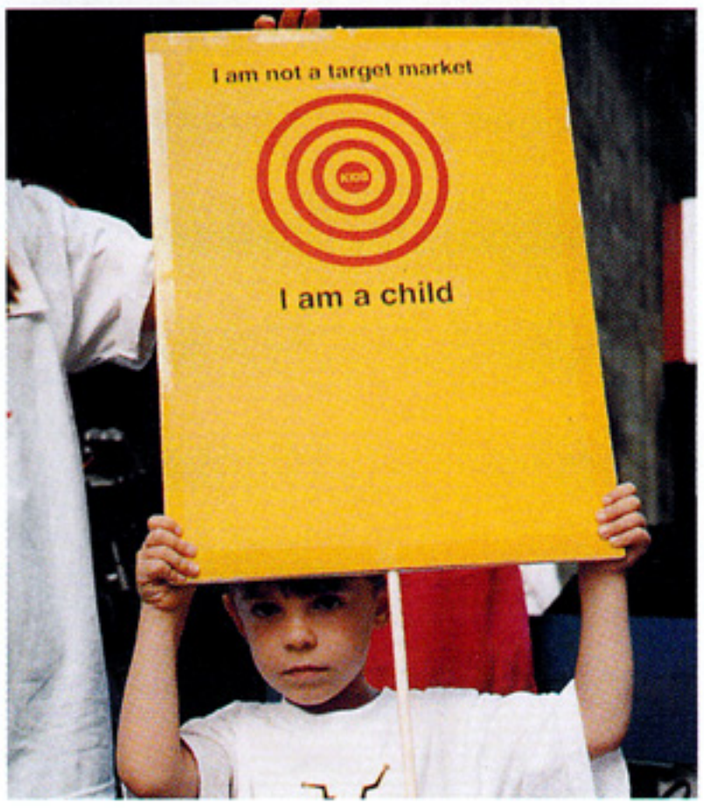


PHOTO: ALLEN KANNER

It was their night. They were the beautiful people; they had the run of the Grand Hyatt New York and they would go home with glittering armloads of statuettes. Ogilvy & Mather was there, and Grey Worldwide, and Leo Burnett, Inc., legendary creators of both the Marlboro Man and Tony the Tiger. But something took the shine off the third annual Golden Marble Awards for "advertising targeted at kids" — the fact that some of America's experts on children had declared the awards no kind of honor at all.

"I thought it would be the perfect issue for a protest: people actually rewarding themselves for manipulating children," says Susan Linn, a psychologist with the Judge Baker Children's Center in Boston, Massachusetts. "It just seemed so appalling."

Linn and some 40 other people — mainly childhood specialists and researchers — gave speeches and rallied outside the Hyatt's doors. Co-organizer Diane Levin of Boston's Wheelock College says advertisers have been given a free ride for too long. With little public debate about whether their products and tactics are harmful to kids, they've generated an onslaught of toys and fast foods. "The whole playscape of children has changed," she says.

The specialists' protest was also a challenge to their professional peers. Levin charges that childhood experts need to take a leading role in re-crafting kids' relationship with commercial culture. Parents and activists alone, she says, are easily — if wrongly — marginalized. Recommendations include a White House conference on corporate marketing; more funding to study advertising's effects; firm federal regulation of toy-based media programs; a ban on advertising of products harmful to kids; ad-free schools; and ethical research standards for the ad industry that meet the strict requirements of academic research.

Advertising firms are well-funded and lightly regulated, which has given them an advantage even over traditional specialists, says Levin. "I know the industry is much more advanced than I am, even though I'm supposedly an expert on early childhood development," she says.

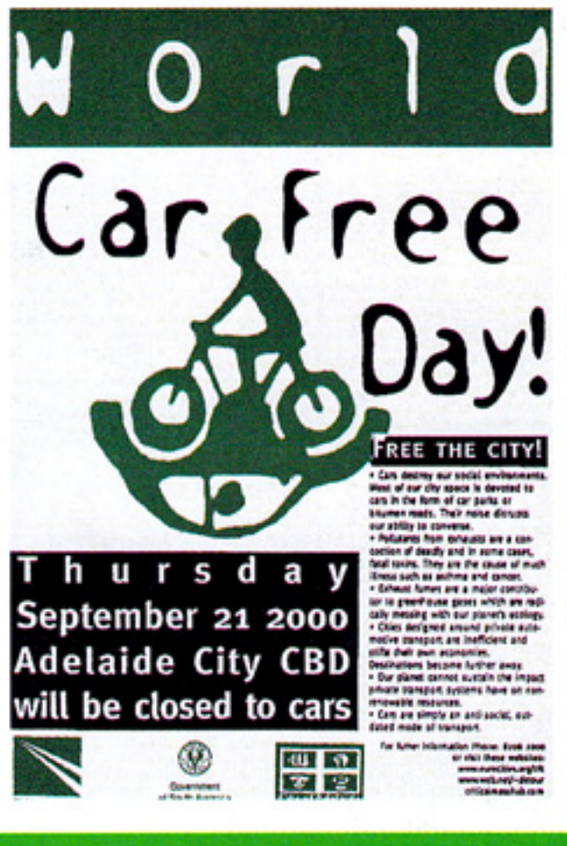
The argument that expertise is being abused to manipulate kids is gaining currency. Following a petition by 60 members last year, the American Psychological Association agreed in June to establish a task force and assign $12,500 to examine the existing research on the effects of advertising on children and the role played by psychologists in possibly harmful marketing to kids.

John Mowen, president of the Society for Consumer Psychology — an organization criticized by the protesting doctors — says his members welcome the task force. "The group leans towards minimizing possible negative effects on vulnerable populations," he says, noting that consumer psychologists were among those involved in limiting tobacco advertising that might affect youth.

On the other hand, he says, most consumer psychologists' research focuses on what makes advertising effective; he estimates that less than ten percent of the society's members study the possible harmful effects of advertising.

"We're looking to understand why advertising works or does not work. The practical application of that can be positive or negative," he says. "What we don't want to see are limitations on basic rights of corporations to free speech."

— *James MacKinnon*



CAR-FREE DAY

World Car-Free Day was made "official" in Adelaide, Australia, this year thanks to canny activists and a mock government pamphlet (above). Stamped with city and state logos, the notice declared the city center closed to traffic on September 21.

This year also marked the emergence of a truly global car-free movement. For the first time, North Americans joined the Australians and Europeans in a day of liberation from car culture.

Next year, activists will reclaim even more streets as local demonstrations coalesce into a show of mass resistance. Our first breath of fresh air could be the car's last gasp.

For campaign tools and contacts, check out:
<www.adbusters.org>
<www.carbusters.ecn.cz>

PHOTOS: JESS KOURKOUNIS

Bogus in Buffalo

Pranksters expose the media's corporate soft spot

To pull a hoax on the news media in a US urban center requires, surely, a high degree of cool and calculation. Prankster Ted Pelton chooses his words carefully as he describes his level of preparation.

"Not at all."

On June 19 in Buffalo, New York, Pelton was a sign-carrying member of the Organization of Corporations Against Cooperation. Completely bogus, the group picketed a cafe and small bookshop in the Allentown neighborhood. The stores' crime? Joining forces to survive — and failing to roll over and make room for big business. The event made the evening news on three Buffalo TV stations, and carried over to morning talk-radio.

Hoax mastermind Brian Lampkin, owner of the picketed Rust Belt Books, says the original aim was to expose shallow news reporting. The strength of the reaction, however, convinced him that the real problem was corporate favoritism. "If you want to get a corporate message across, they'll do everything they can to make sure you get heard," says Lampkin.

Lee Coppola, a 30-year press veteran and dean of journalism at nearby St. Bonaventure University, says the reality is more nuanced. Buffalo has seen tough economic times, he notes, and the view that big business could save the city is at the surface of public opinion. "The ruse was built on a strange premise, but it was a believable premise," he says.

Still, Coppola charges that media companies no longer ask their reporters to uncover stories, only to cover events. Under that model, corporations have the upper hand. "It comes down to who is ingenious enough to find a way to feed the pablum," says Coppola.

On September 26, OCAC struck again, warning chain stores at Buffalo State College that a local anti-corporate protest could get out of hand. The "Corporate Defenders" promised to protect the shops from the "angry mob" — but recommended the stores shut down. Managers scurried to check with head office, and a Barnes & Noble did finally close its doors.

"The university police were thanking us for our participation and discussing strategy with us," recalls Lampkin. "It was as subversive and creepy as anything I've ever experienced."

— James MacKinnon

Fake Subway Jam

A crew of anonymous L.A. artists took city planning underground this summer. Eight billboards were erected on the city's west side announcing a plan for a new commuter subway route. Although the plan was a sham, the intent of the group, known only as Heavy Trash, was serious: "[We want] to promote civic dialogue about the need for better transportation in Los Angeles."

PHOTO: HEAVY TRASH OPERATIVE

PHOTO: PETER RALPH

From the Airwaves to the Streets

Media Inc. takes a hit in San Francisco

If the rage against the US National Association of Broadcasters' radio convention failed to make your local news this September, consider what was being chanted in the streets: "We're pissed! No shit! We hate the corporate media!" The San Francisco event was more than "just another protest" — it was the public launch of a movement for counter-corporate media democracy. The radio industry was just the first target.

"The airwaves are supposed to be for us," said Mark Adams, a Kentucky native now living in San Francisco. "It's not supposed to be for corporations. I want to hear the truth about what's going on out there on my streets."

The fun began in earnest on Friday, September 21. As the elite ranks of Radio, Inc., arrived at the Moscone Convention Center, four activists locked down in the lobby, cheered on by a crowd outside. After police regained control, another demo laid siege to the local offices of Clear Channel — a broadcast conglomerate that owns more than a thousand radio stations. By the day's end, nine activists had been arrested, as were three lawyers attempting to see their jailed clients.

On Saturday, close to 2,000 people rallied at the United Nations Plaza and later, 200 faced police lines at the Hilton Hotel, host of the the NAB's 2000 Marconi Awards. The complete blow-by-blow, of course, was streamed live by the San Fran Indy Media Center website to microradio stations nationwide.

Following a spate of mergers by America's media empires, corporate concentration has raised earnest concern. But Steve Rendall, an NAB arrestee and analyst with New York-based Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting, says the bigger issue is more fundamental: the power to access and generate media.

"Imagine if you woke up tomorrow and the DuPont Corporation was in charge of the Everglades National Park," said Rendall. "People would be outraged — they know that national parks are a precious national resource. We have to start thinking of the airwaves like that."

In America, the frontline of media democracy has long been micropower radio. Accused of blurring the signals of their corporate cousins, "pirate" stations are the frequent target of Federal Communications Commission busts. Following a "Council of War" in San Francisco, microradio veteran Stephen Dunifer said civil disobedience will need to be intensified.

"They're gonna do what they're gonna do, and we're gonna do what we're gonna do," he said. "What we're gonna do is put thousands of stations on the air, sanctioned or unsanctioned, and there's no way the government — unless they want to go into full military mode — can deal with thousands of stations."

Dunifer may have spoken too soon. In the weeks following the NAB protests, the feds swept the nation for micropower broadcasters. One target was Human Rights Radio, run by the legendary Mbanna Kantako. A blind man, Kantako began transmitting 13 years ago to speak out against police brutality inflicted on blacks in Springfield, Illinois. When the government shut him down on September 29, he had been on the air for more than 4,000 straight days.

— John Anderson

Scrambled Justice

A protest song about DVD decryption highlights free speech in peril

His song has no insurgent rallying cry. There's no catchy refrain, like Bob Dylan's "The Times They Are A Changin'." No funk exclamations — "Good God now!" — like those in Edwin Starr's "War." Truth be told, as protest music goes, Joseph Wecker's song has all the poetic finesse of computer code. And that's why so many people are paying attention: the song *is* computer code.

Wecker's "Descramble.mp3" made the news in September when the popular music-downloading website MP3.com banned it, citing "offensive or otherwise inappropriate" lyrics. "This function is void/it takes two args/the first is SEC, a pointer to the vector of 2048 unsigned bytes," the song begins. It's essentially an English-language version of DeCSS, a code used to sidestep encryption programs on digital video discs.

Originally written to give Linux users a way to watch digital movies, the code bypasses DVD's Content Scrambling System (CSS). Late in 1999, the code was outlawed after Hollywood interests successfully argued in court that circumventing copyright protection measures was illegal. Unlike the high-profile suit in which Napster was accused of helping people steal digital music files, the DeCSS case focused not on unlawful use of technology, but on restricting the flow of information about circumvention technologies.

Wecker describes the case in an analogy. "It has always been illegal to copy someone's copyrighted poem," he says. "Now it's illegal to explain to someone how a Xerox machine works."

If the digital copyright case didn't ruffle MP3.com, another suit did — the one that inspired Wecker's song. This summer, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), representing eight major film studios, sued Eric Corley and his "hacker quarterly" *2600* for distributing the outlawed code on his website. David Touretzky, a professor of computer science at Carnegie Mellon University, testified in the case that he believes code is a form of speech — it's the way computer programmers express themselves. Moved by this testimony, Wecker grabbed his guitar and set Touretzky's plain-English version of DeCSS to music, making it definitively an expressive, if not artistic, act.

He never expected anyone to take notice. "The song only became newsworthy when the judge actually ruled against *2600*," says Wecker, a Salt Lake City-based programmer and owner of three software/Internet-related firms. "Only then was the song a political statement instead of just a joke."

Judge Lewis Kaplan ruled that programming code is speech — but not the kind protected by the US First Amendment. Kaplan lumped computer code in with libel, obscenity, slander, and incitement to riot as types of speech not deserving constitutional protection. So, while it's perfectly legal for a website to host schematic diagrams for building bombs or the formula for LSD, it's now against the law to post or link to the DeCSS source code. "What Judge Kaplan did was invent a whole new category of unprotected speech: basically, anything that threatens the profits of Time Warner and Disney," says Touretzky.

(Prior to the trial, *2600*'s defense team filed a motion to disqualify Kaplan from the case on grounds of bias after learning that his former law firm had advised Time Warner on issues related to DVD technology. Kaplan would not remove himself from the case, a fact that will likely factor into the upcoming appeal.)

Kaplan's decision extends well beyond coders like Wecker and Touretzky. Not only does it hinder the flow of information that allows for testing, reverse engineering and ultimately improving software and encryption technology, but it also impacts the jobs of, say, journalists. By law, this article cannot reproduce or offer a web link to a site that contains the full DeCSS code. Similarly, a case is now pending that cites Copyleft, a New Jersey-based retailer, among nearly 500 others who posted DeCSS on their sites, for aiding circumvention of DVD scramblers. Their crime: Copyleft sells protest T-shirts bearing an incomplete copy of the code.

> The judge lumped computer code with libel and obscenity as forms of speech undeserving of constitutional protection

Surprisingly, Wecker isn't angered by MP3.com's censorship of his song, noting that an understandable fear of litigation drove the company's actions. In September, MP3.com was ordered to pay Universal Music Group up to $25,000 per CD for infringing copyright with their MyMP3.com music storage locker — a penalty that could total $250 million. But Touretzky has another take. "They didn't want to be portrayed as abetting 'evil pirates,' since they've been found guilty of piracy themselves," he says. "They're trying to make nice with Hollywood."

Such self-preservation may be wise, considering that the MPAA and its music counterpart, the Recording Industry Association of America, have been faring well both in lawsuits and in intimidating those they brand as hackers. But perhaps the tables are turning. Like the increasingly popular MP3-sharing services Gnutella, Gnutmeg and others, there's no central server where you can find DeCSS, which means countless copies exist and the ban on its use is nearly unenforceable. In a published report, Judge Kaplan admits as much: "This horse is out of the barn." In the realm of protest music, Bob Dylan's, not Wecker's, words come to mind: "Don't speak too soon/For the wheel's still in spin/And there's no tellin' who that it's namin'/For the loser now will be later to win/For the times they are a' changin'."

—*Paul Schmelzer*

For more information, visit the Electronic Frontier Foundation <www.eff.org>, <OpenDVD.org>, Harvard Law School's Berkman Center for Internet and Society <cyber.law.harvard.edu/>, or the Gallery of CSS Descramblers <cs.cmu.edu/~dst/DeCSS/Gallery/>.

Rest In Peace, Brazil

A corporation moves to control the national memory

PHOTO: J. DA MATA

FIGHTING THE CORPORATE TIME KEEPERS: ACTIVISTS PROTEST IN FRONT OF A GLOBO NETWORK CLOCK, WHICH COMMEMORATES THE 500TH ANNIVERSARY OF BRAZIL'S "DISCOVERY"

In the year before the 500th anniversary of the "discovery" of Brazil this year, immense clocks were erected in the major cities. They were commissioned not by the people, nor the government, but by Globo Network, a mega-media corporation so powerful that its founder, Roberto Marinho, was profiled in a documentary called *Beyond Citizen Kane*. The clocks would count down the past 500 years, counting with the dictatorial hands of a broadcasting network with the proven power to elect and depose presidents.

The whole of Brazil was whipped into a "discover" frenzy under the direction of Globo Network. The lie was maintained that Brazil was discovered by Pedro Alvares Cabral on April 22, 1500. It is already known, of course, that various other expeditions landed here before that and the Portuguese crown ordered the "discovery" for economic reasons. The most absurd fact of the entire discovery farce is that there were already people here — our Indians, who were massacred to near extinction.

The Brazilian and Portuguese governments thought up the official name, "Meeting of Two Civilizations," wanting to sell the idea that the beginning of European colonization here was in some way an important step in our development. But what kind of meeting leaves 5.5 million people dead? Where in the minutes did it predict that, by the year 2000, 91 percent of the new nation's Atlantic forests would be gone, 50 percent of the grazing and woodland lost, and 15 percent of the Amazon rainforest destroyed? What kind of civilization lives with war in its cities (in 1999 alone, 5,700 people were assassinated in São Paulo alone)?

Who *has* profited from these 500 years? The English certainly made the most of the meeting, exploiting Brazil's natural wealth and turning them into products to sell back to Brazilians. The only country in Latin America that didn't accept the English industrial monopoly at the time was Paraguay, which was investing in its own industry. That ended when the English stirred up enough ill-will that Brazil declared war over a banality, fighting Paraguay for six years (1864-1870). The United States stepped in to find Brazil tamed and exhausted. Today, TV serials, advertisements, cartoons, music and films are shipped daily from the US to obtain gigantic profits and further adapt Brazilians to the American way of life.

So Globo Network wants us to celebrate 500 years. Four days before the Globo party, on the National Day of the Indian, the demonstrations began. In Rio de Janeiro, groups ranging from the opposition Worker's Party to anarchist students to the teachers' union gathered near the Globo clock in Avenida Atlantica. We decided to mark the occasion as a funeral, and we named *our* meeting "500 Years of Bullshit." We enacted the burial march of all that is dead and corrupt, but has yet to be buried. We would bury politicians and the TV preachers, the oxygen-starved lagoon and the beach full of shit, the forest suffocating with pollution. Dressed in black, we carried dark coffins and sang our dirge.

At every traffic light, we handed out our manifesto. "The sea, the sky, the whole world is filthy and corrupt," it begins. "We here in Rio are drowning, we're debating in slimy wells, in stained oceans of sewage." People began to join in, until we invaded one lane of the huge Avenida, then two lanes. And as happens in any revolutionary act, a young secondary student spontaneously hurled the first stone.

The atmosphere toughened up. More stones were thrown. The police responded with tear gas and shock grenades. It was a moment to get radical, the moment in which real interests are defined. And then the Worker's Party sound system kicked in, ordering everyone to go home. They had decided yet again that now is not the time for revolution.

The clock ticked on, that empty symbol, that authoritarian order to celebrate whenever Globo Network claps its hands. Our intention had been to vandalize the clock. Vandalism can be an intentional violation of something invested with a certain value or meaning. *We* are vandalized beings. We are led to think we are choosing freely, and to value the myth of our freedom of choice.

— *Vera Schroeder and Jorge Goia*

fRee* Fun

Call it a fRee* for all. When a group of jammers from Winnipeg, Manitoba decided to hold an outdoor festival this summer featuring live music, DJs, dance, puppets, drumming and other diversions, they made one rule: no one would be charged a dime for anything. Not for the food, not for the water, not for massages, not for the bands. The organizers reasoned that people needed a break from paying others to create their "fun" for them. The festival raged on for seven hours before the police, on slender grounds, cracked down. In the end eight people were arrested. Fittingly, none were charged.

INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO BOYCOTT PHILIP MORRIS FOOD PRODUCTS

WHY ARE YOU BUYING YOUR FOOD FROM A TOBACCO COMPANY?

Did you know that every product pictured here is owned by Philip Morris, the world's largest tobacco corporation? Chances are you've been helping to promote Marlboro cigarettes without even knowing it. Now you can withdraw that support. Next time you go shopping, boycott these products. Keep your family food budget out of Philip Morris' pockets.

FINALLY, THE BATTLE against Big Tobacco is being fought on even ground: advertisement to advertisement. The ad, above, can be found in the December issue of *Harper's* magazine.

You can join this campaign by downloading and reproducing the ad in as many venues as possible. Visit adbusters.org, email boycottPM@adbusters.org or call 1-800-663-1243.

DAVID KUBIAK

Big Medicine

In anti-corporate biotics, you may already be the cure

Humanity's revolt against corporate dominion is the evolutionary equivalent of war. We are now the feckless underdogs, and desperately need fateful new memes plus unstoppable means to cascade them through the zeitgeist. The real cascading force is of course with thee, br'er readers. You are such a fiercely special crowd — so madly diverse yet reliably convergent around fresh schemes to rescue our collective ass from terminal incorporation. Coherent yet shrewdly unorganized, you are potentially everywhere and connect to 10,000 other networks of bizarre seditious sway. In glorious sum, you ramify, people, and your defiance reverberates hopefully between our body politic's most distant chakras.

Clearly that body now ails grievously and Something Must Be Done. Less obviously, I trust a great number of you will initiate the doing.

- Does distress even in far-off lands among total strangers often reach out and twinge you?
- Do collisions with malignant authority oddly energize you?
- Do you relish collusion, but detest hierarchy? Think insubordination is a vital civic good?
- Can you see others trapped inside corporate membranes as recognizably human and sometimes feel moved to help those desperate to be free?
- Stung by the corporate crowd's contempt and injustice, do you long for better arms, stronger defenses, more penetrating ammunition?
- Would you settle for a few silver bullets?

If so, you're probably implicated in the planet's quickening immune forces, the Immunogentiles, the magic ten percent of us that reflexively respond to eco-social affliction and are inexplicably moved to *do something*. In older, less helpful words, we are the malcontents, populists, dissidents, rebels, heretics, anarchists, radical tree-huggers and flaming moonbeam goo-goos. May god have mercy on our souls.

This is not a fun calling. Our incorporated adversaries are huge, opaque, connected, acutely toxic to our health and dreams; they afflict everything they touch with lethal consumptive fevers. Terrifying foe, no mistake — but mission impossible? Contemplate the fell little heroes within our own bodies. Our immune cells, too, are vastly outnumbered, totaling only a scant hundred million in our 30-trillion-cell bio-polities. That's one lone leukocyte ranger to guard every 300,000 in your cellular silent majority. In American terms, that's about 840 white hats to police the whole national shooting match. But note: if we're not egregiously stupid, these micro-vigilantes manage our defenses quite well, and we often live much longer than we can quite remember why.

If our relative fewness doesn't exactly explain our impotence against the current crises, maybe we should re-examine our diagnostic directions. First, we might recall that any immune system depends entirely on intelligence — its understanding of an enemy's true nature, strengths, weaponry and fatal flaws; where it is most vulnerable; when it least expects attack. Once this diagnostic picture is pieced together, something quite marvelous occurs. Our lymph gland universities begin churning out wave upon wave of diverse special forces uniquely prepared to tag, stun or dissolve the identified foe. These activated individuals then converge upon their pathogen with all the bio-molecular analogues of journalism, law and guerrilla war.

But who or what is our real foe? Well, fancy this. Let's assume that like most diseases, eco-social scourges are caused by predators or parasites that plunder their victims for energy and nutrients. In this case, though, suppose our pathogens are not microscopic but immense. Accept for a moment the idea that big corporate bodies constitute a true life form. That is, they fulfill all recognized definitions of life; they can grow, learn, interact with their environs, ingest and excrete, communicate, behave, reproduce and die. Suppose further that these Big Bodies constitute a literal interbreeding new species, one now competing with ours for evolutionary control. And while such Big Bodies have little more sense than itinerant tumors, they have the collective power to shape their environment (including us) to serve their consumptive needs.

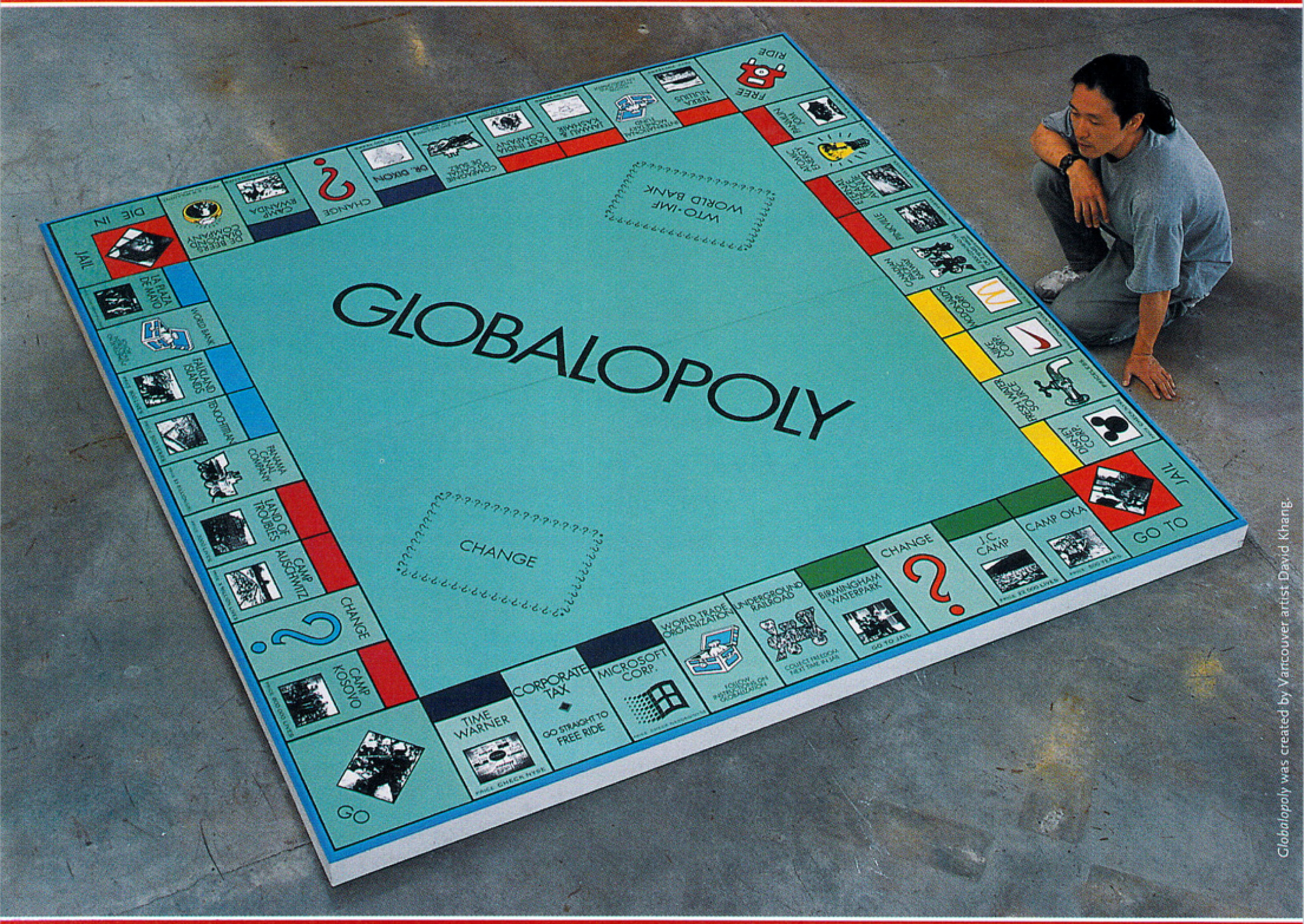
If such metamedical insights hold true, all our diverse symptoms of corporate malaise — ubiquitous pollution, genetic agrobiz, nuclear peril, anaesthetic media, contracting liberties, widening disparities, vanishing species et mucho lugubrious cetera — largely stem from a single source and can thus be simultaneously relieved. It is up to us to catalyze our great corporate slime molds into Final Fruition, a contagious defection and deliquescence that will bonsai, localize and democratize these vast bodies once and for all.

The end game is near, and our odds quite exhilarating. Only a few thousand mammoth Them now face millions of militant Us. If we're half as smart as I think we are, Big Bodies shall soon be known as our first deservedly endangered species.

— *David Kubiak is a* Kyoto Journal *correspondent. He writes and lectures on tactical memetics, ki and Big Body pathology.*
<www.nancho.net/bigmed2000>

GLOBALOPOLY

FINALLY, YOUR CHANCE TO BE A PLAYER.



Globalopoly was created by Vancouver artist David Khang.

THE GAME IS FIXED!!!

Buy low, sell high. Hot stocks, big mergers. E-trade, white-collar crime. It's the best game in town, but the stakes are high. For some, a four point loss on the stock-option bonus. For others, cultural genocide. And this time, you're playing for keeps.

CREATIVE RESISTANCE

YOU'RE A BRILLIANT visual communicator just graduated from design school. No dot.com has yet offered you a huge salary plus stock options. So what are you going to do? What are your choices? How will your auspicious career unfold? Here are three design paradigms to choose from:

Designium 2000

Reminiscent of the Japan Inc. model of the '80s, the Finnish government has come up with a plan for launching Finland into the higher echelons of global design. Businesses, universities and design schools around the country have been recruited to the cause. According to Professor Yrjö Sotamaa, Rector of the University of Art and Design, "The development of this national system will be supported by a Round Table of Design, which will monitor the functionality of the design system, make immediate, long-range proposals for the attainment of objectives, encourage mutual cooperation between the various actors, and monitor the effectivity of measures."

The core of the whole effort is a new media and culture center under construction in Helsinki. The Finnish government hopes it will create the necessary environment for the birth of "Designium," the most important center of design innovation in Europe.

Will this paradigm succeed and spread? Will designers want to work in this kind of environment? Why wouldn't they? It isn't all that different from the corporate environment in which the bulk of the half-million designers and creative directors around the world work today.

Corporate Designium 2000

Once you're inside this dominant design paradigm, it's really quite nice. The pay's great, the culture's dynamic and the perks are easy to get used to. All you have to do is bubble over with enthusiasm about product marketing, about creating warm glows around your client's brands.

Designers have a long history of accepting this deal – delivering "design solutions" without question and, in the words of design critic W.A. Dwiggins, "tripping over each other to kiss corporate ass." Then again, there *have* been designers like the legendary Tibor Kalman who repeatedly took on corporate work and never kissed ass till the day he died.

Design Anarchy

This option is madness. Choose it only if you are certain the other options will give you ulcers and corrode your soul. And only if you have a huge ego; if you *know* you are one of the powerbrokers of this information age, firmly placed among the chosen few designers who hold Prometheus' holy fire in their hands. Choose it if you live by this one overriding imperative: *Design must be free!*

You'll suffer for years and live like a stray dog, but there will be compensations. You'll have the joy of breaking all the rules, of freely mixing art and politics, of pouring your beliefs into your work. Eventually, if you're really as brilliant as you think, you'll have a crack at pushing the boundaries of global culture with bold new styles and cool new ways of being.

And once in a while, when a client really pisses you off, you'll have the supreme satisfaction of telling him where to go. In this age of designium, that's got to be worth something. No?

— *Kalle Lasn*

CHECK OUT THE "FIRST THINGS FIRST 2000" DESIGN MANIFESTO AT WWW.ADBUSTERS.ORG

MANHATTAN I: GREEN HEART

In 1992, a map of New York became a map of the world. As the city braced for five weeks of Earth Summit meetings, Wendy Brawer, an eco-minded industrial designer, launched a project to map the Big Apple's environmental pros and cons. A "green map."

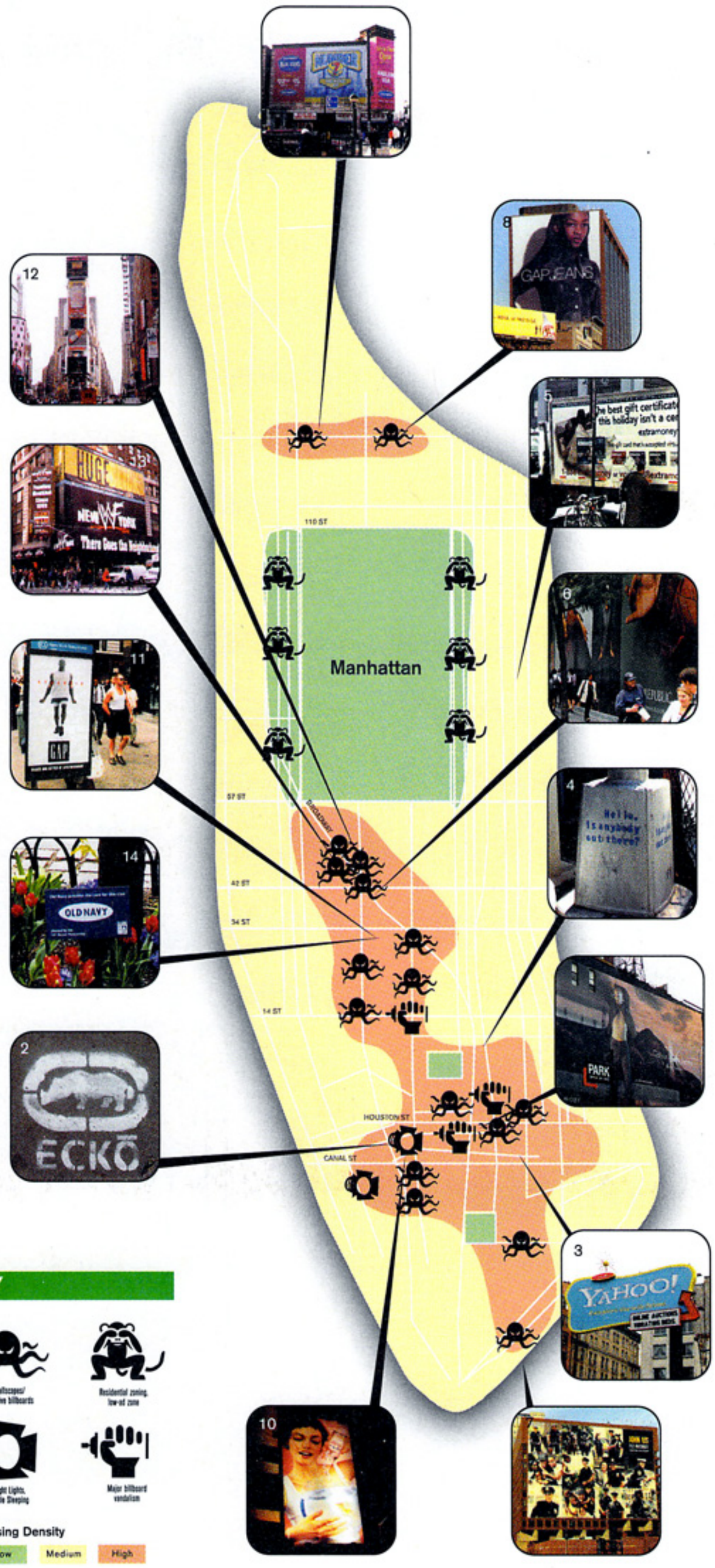
Today, Brawer's daily mail comes postmarked from more far-flung project partners: Zimbabwe, Singapore, Denmark, Cuba. Gone global, the Green Map System now involves 130 cities in 35 countries. What it adds up to, Brawer says, is a story the mainstream press isn't telling. "I feel like there's a news blackout in this country," Brawer said after a green map tour through Europe. "How can we be so far behind?"

Brawer moved from sculpture to design in 1989, hoping to reach more people. Instead, she found herself frustrated by a "client-driven" industry. With the mapping project, she made a break. By 1995, she built the original Green Apple Map concept into a web-based headquarters for global green mapping. The foundation of the system is "a living language" of icons that identify everything from star-gazing sites to toxic dumps. With every new region, the lexicon grows. African mappers added soil erosion and poaching, for example; Singapore flagged mangrove forests.

Still, the Green Map System is not a free-for-all — its copyrighted icons can only be used under a written agreement. According to Brawer, the restrictions make it possible to track the system, protect the icons from use in corporate "greenwashing," and ensure that mapping groups are ready for at least a six-month commitment.

If the system is, well, systematized, its goals remain the same as the grassroots mapping that's been going on since at least the '60s: reconnection. Following her own design research, Brawer became an avowed cyclist, composter and community gardener. She also came to see the hurly-burly of New York with different eyes. "I see the green things first," she says. "I see threads of hope everywhere I go."

More: <www.greenmap.org>



MANHATTAN II: CORPORATE FACE

"As much as you can define New York by neighborhoods, you can define it by ads," says Rachel Neumann of *Stay Free!* magazine, which launched its "ad creep" map this year. Neumann was one of 35 scouts who roamed the city in September 1999, tracking the commercial takeover of public space. Volunteer designers then took over production, and the map reached baffled tourists and bemused New Yorkers during a street event in May. "The underlying political message is that ad saturation in New York has become as basic as architecture and the subway system," says Neumann. In fact, one series of sidewalk advertisements attract the eye with fonts and icons borrowed from the subway system – a visual language essential to city mobility.

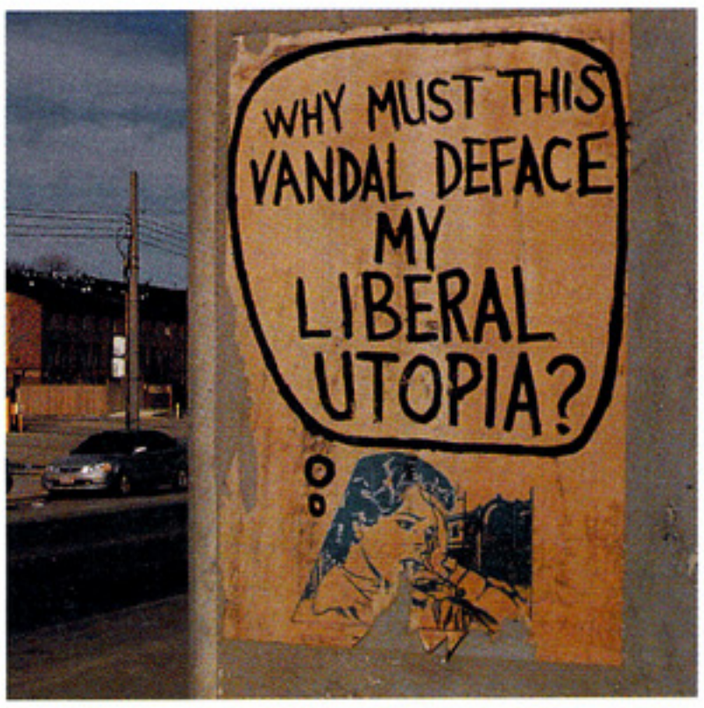
Of course, you don't need a map to know when you've entered one of New York's high-density ad zones. There are the ads on the sidewalks, storefronts and light posts; the leaflets and freebies; the circling "street blimps," billboards mounted on flatbed trucks; the *real* blimps posting logos in the sky. And then there are the vinyl billboards that tower 15-stories and, because of their one-way material, can be placed over windows. (Huge and shimmering, the billboards have been decried for making the city "look like a website.")

So far, the vinyl ads have proved too large and inaccessible to be hit by guerrilla billboard artists. Already, every culture jammer in New York risks run-ins with a police force that has even clamped down on jaywalking. Curiously, though, law-and-order officials seem reluctant to bust hired stencil artists who spread ad-graffiti, or to enforce signage laws that forbid many of the billboard behemoths. "They see it as important to fight quality of life crimes, but they don't see ad creep as a quality of life issue," says Neumann.

Is there any escape? Neumann argues that too many people try to block out the ads, ignoring the marketing invasion. The ad-creep map urges New Yorkers to confront reality. But if it's just a moment of respite you need, Neumann offers this advice: "Go to your apartment and hope there's not a billboard over your windows."

More: <www.stayfreemagazine.org>

DECONSTRUCTION
SUBSTITUTE FO



ART IS FREE

There is a palpable shift towards political art on the streets of the urban worldscape. It's art without boundaries, says Jen Wilson, a Toronto photographer who is keeping a record of inner-city art. "Images that thwart 'the Man' can be found behind and between the business buildings like secret messages hidden in the shadows. They have nothing to sell and nothing to lose."

Top of page: Rebecca Ross and friends strung 6,000 feet of her *Deconstruction* barricade tape to protest a proposed "Galleria" shopping center in New Haven, CT.

Clockwise from top left: two examples of Toronto street art, photographed by Jen Wilson; electrical inspector Bob Tate used public sculpture to protest mall development on wetlands outside Whitehorse, Yukon; billboard jam in Nanaimo, BC.

A MALL IS A POOR
R A COMMUNITY

WHITE HATS AT WORK

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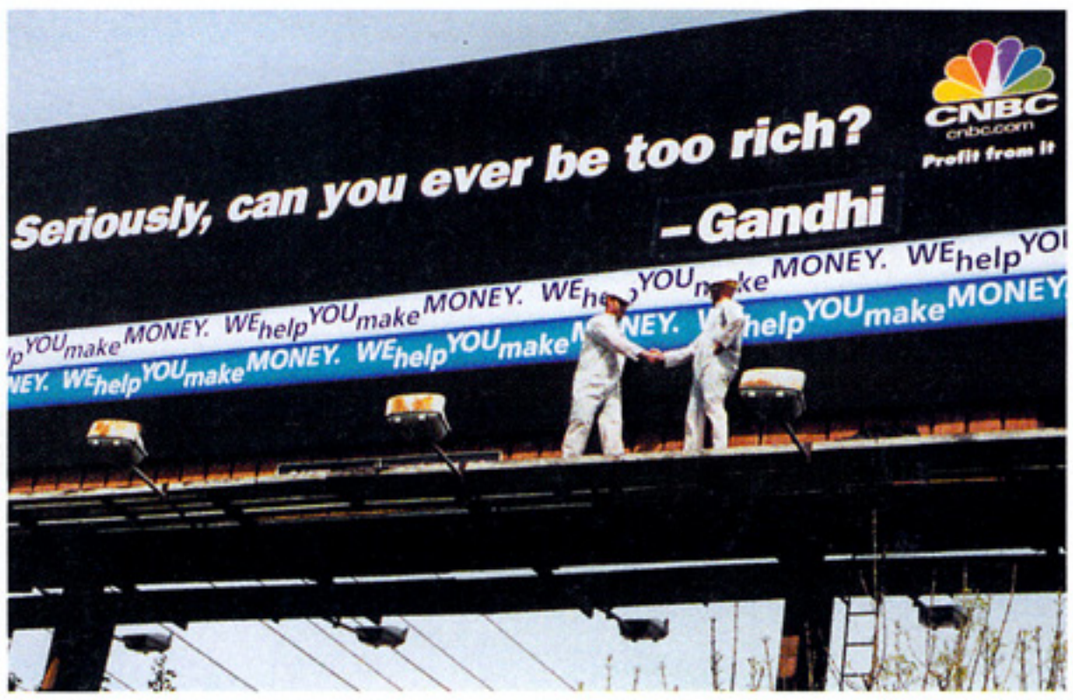

EARTH: A DOUBLE-BAGGER

Japanese artist Mika Suzuki's "A Planet About to be Dumped" won top prize in the Eco-Creatives Graphic Art 2000 Competition this summer. The text reads: "Disposable?"

Eco-Creatives was held by Global Village, a Tokyo-based NGO, to promote environmental awareness and progressive design. It was inspired by the *First Things First 2000* Design Manifesto and the *Adbusters* Creative Resistance Contest.

See <www.globalvillage.or.jp> for the full results and more information.

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Adbusters will award a total of two thousand dollars to winning entries. Entries must be postmarked by Dec.1, 2000 Work will be judged by the Adbusters staff and winners announced in our Spring 2001 issue. Adbusters retains the right to reproduce winning entries in our magazine, website and in campaign materials.

ON LETTING GO

The teacher, Alan Senauke, walks into the room at the Berkeley Zen Center, where the students are settling into cross-legged positions on mats on the floor for their meditation, or zazen. He greets everyone with a slightly distracted smile before beginning to speak.

"I found the flowers on the altar quite startling when I came in just now. Were they there this morning? It's a new arrangement? Okay. I would have been chagrined to learn that I hadn't noticed them earlier. They are full of birth and death. Very bright. As we all are today.

Most of us are sitting on and off, from five in the morning until nine at night. It is a great pleasure to sit. I can sense the urgency that we bring to it. We're lucky to have this time in our lives, and lucky to have a place like this where we can come and practice, and really face the questions of how we are living and how we will live. Such questions teach us how to approach our day, our lives, our work, our family. How we face the wall in zazen. It is a noble endeavor, what we do. We do it with all our heart.

Some of you may have seen a book by Uchiyama Roshi, *Opening the Hand of Thought*. Opening the hand of thought is simply relinquishing. When you do so, your ideas, your desires, fall away. They slide through your fingers like water. Or they drift away like clouds in an endless sky. It's extremely relaxing. We often feel we have to hold on tight to something or it's going to slip away. This is the source of tremendous tension. It's a difficult way to live.

As I was preparing to speak today, I was sitting upstairs in the new room in the attic where there are big skylights. I was nestled in a little corner and, looking up, I saw the sky with clouds drifting across it. For just that moment, nothing else was needed. It was perfect. I could have been anywhere. Then, not surprisingly, self-consciousness reared its head and I was back. I heard the vacuum cleaner downstairs. Silvie was practicing the violin. The phone rang. I was trying foolishly to hold on to my concentration, hold on to that pleasant moment. By holding on I lost it. It wasn't a great loss. The sky is always there and our opportunity to gain it and lose it is always there. We can always open the "hand of thought" and let things go. Suzuki Roshi wrote that "Renunciation is not giving up the things of the world, but accepting that they go away." Our youth will go. So will our strength, our health, our parents, our friends. Our bodies and our lives themselves will slip away. Most of us find these thoughts hard to bear. We don't much like impermanence, so we are always trying to cut bargains with it, or get around it in some way. It seems unfair that the things we love will just go away. They'll go away whether we let go of them or not.

In our time we have cultivated a "Burger King philosophy" to life, and sometimes we apply this philosophy to our meditation. We want it our way. We want to have it in a nice, safe place. We also want to have our good job, our satisfying work, our wholesome family life, our healthy bodies. I include myself in this: I want it my way. I have a notion that if I do my zazen right and show up at all the appropriate times, then I can have it all ways. Everything will be perfectly cooked.

But that idea does not necessarily hold. It ignores the idea of impermanence. It ignores the fact that impermanence is itself perfection. None of the things we treasure would be possible without what has come before, without the arising and the falling away of other generations, beings, forms. All these things are continuously falling away and giving way to new life and new existence. What would it be like if everything created kept existing and piling up? Not pretty. We are in fact already plagued by things piling up. We call it garbage. And usually the things that pile up are precisely the former objects of our desire, things we think we are done with.

The scraps of food that we leave behind become compost. They are worked on by the sky and the rain. There's a chemical transformation and they become food again for other things that grow and blossom. In theory this cycle of impermanence seems perfect — until it arrives as me.

That's the point of our practice. How will we live accepting that impermanence, not foolishly trying to exempt ourselves from it? How will we live with other beings? What can we offer back willingly, freely, knowing that our bodies themselves will be offered back, no matter what we think or do?

I like and experience what Suzuki Roshi said, that renunciation is not giving up the things of the world, but accepting that they go away. In my work at Buddhist Peace Fellowship, I often find myself in distant cities without my usual circle of family and friends, without familiar places and things around. And a strange kind of desire arises in me. Many other people contend with desires that are stronger and more destructive: "If only I could find the right thing to eat, or the right thing to buy, then this gnawing, empty feeling that I have would go away." It doesn't. Nothing resolves the sense of lack and incompleteness. I'm not a heavy-duty consumer — I never had enough money to be one — but I like my pleasures. I like to eat. I like my comforts. Sometimes I think I can buy them. If only I could, things would be easier. I can't. The voice of practice tells me it won't work. What I really want is to get around, or get away from, this suffering, greedy state of mind.

I'm not saying one shouldn't find life pleasurable. But in my experience, when one just seeks pleasures, when desire or need or lack becomes what drives us, that is when life gets problematic. I think this is precisely the Buddha's teaching. Right here, on this particular day of sitting, our lives are fairly simple. Our business in sesshin is just to let go of our preferences, our likes and dislikes, and make an effort toward relinquishing body and mind, staying present. This is pretty challenging. I find myself flipping back and forth between preferences and release.

In daily life, in our wider life, the challenges are more intense. We have the Bodhisattva precept of not stealing, or not taking >>

>> what is not given. When we look closely at that precept, what does it say about how we live? By whose efforts do we live?

We live, to an extent, by our own labors and efforts and work. And yet there's a hidden or unseen portion of our lives that is helped along and supported by people and beings all around the world, whose efforts we either don't see or take for granted (or exploit thoughtlessly). Part of our practice is to try to see those

When desire drives us, life gets problematic

things, that for various reasons, are hidden from us. Usually they are hidden because we are living inside a system that is always trying to sell us things — a system that's run on desire. In this system, it's best for those who depend on profit to obscure the real sources of things, and of course to blunt any sharp questions about what we really need. It's hard to find out where things really come from.

In our meal chant we say, "Innumerable labors brought us this food. May we know how it comes to us." Every head of lettuce has been picked by hand. And this, of course, calls to awareness the issue of legal and illegal labor and immigration. Someone in the kitchen has torn and handled every leaf of lettuce that we eat. The amount of time and labor and distance and interdependence of earth and sky and water that goes into a salad is almost unimaginable. Our whole lives are like that. I urge you to investigate.

Part of that investigation is to notice what things are letting go of you, what things are whispering from within you, "I don't need this. This is not really sustaining my deepest intention to live whole, to live for the benefit of all people." First, listen to this quiet voice that speaks truth about what wants to be let go of. Also investigate what you can let go of, measured against what you think you really need. Look and listen without judgment. Look at yourself kindly and with patience.

Things are always falling away. They will continue to do so. The more you can open the hand of thought, and let what's unnecessary slip through, the easier, more graceful and harmonious life you will be able to lead. You can come to understand that the really important things are there. The sky is there. The ocean is there. Life is there. Those things will not slip through your fingers. What is true will remain."

[Alan Senauke now opens the floor to questions.]

Student: How do we, in a pragmatic way, practice letting go of our likes and dislikes? We want to do it, but how do we do it?

Teacher: It starts with just sitting still. If you have to, with every impulse that passes through your mind, ask yourself the question, "Right now, is this important? Do I really need it?"

Student: When people go to the supermarket, there are some basic rules they try to follow to stay on track: don't shop when you're hungry. Take a list and have a budget. These same rules apply to meditation. But you still need a structure, you need technique. You need to apply these rules.

Teacher: That's true. But I also think you can use your desires, your likes and dislikes as tools, what Thich Nhat Hanh calls the "bell of mindfulness." Over time you begin to notice the impulses that are coming up, and the moment they do, they ring the bell. They remind you of your question: "do I need this? Is it important? Is it helpful?"

Student: I can handle the supermarket — I don't shop much. But there are certain, deeper desires that seduce me into thinking they will fill the hunger. These are the desires that turn into addictions. And they always come when I am feeling too low and weak to resist them. So I can start doing the exercise, as you've outlined it, and ask myself, "Do I really need this? Well, no. Will it really nourish me? Probably not. Will it be destructive to me? Undoubtedly." And yet I still want it. I've found the best way to cope in these circumstances is not to try to override the desire with my will, but to find a replacement that will feed the hunger.

Teacher: Right. You need to turn toward something.

Student: This morning we were talking approvingly about Frank Sinatra. And then we had a lecture on the problems of "my way." I'm trying to figure out if this is a contradiction or a paradox. Is there beauty in "my way," something you find admirable?

Teacher: Yeah. Don't you think?

Student: I'm asking you! [Laughter] My own feeling is, I think we should be careful overselling the idea of getting rid of desire. Desire is what put us all here. You can do a lot of things with it. It's very energizing. It can be destructive, but then, so can creativity. Often great poetry — one thinks of Rilke — is drenched with desire.

Teacher: That's the realm I live in. Checking back and forth between desires — which I have many of — and relinquishment, asking myself what I need and what I appreciate. I don't know that much about Frank Sinatra the man, but there is something beautiful in his songs. I was reading the liner notes to an album and I learned this: At the height of Sinatra's success in the late 1950s or early '60s, when he was making movies and making records, being in Vegas all the time, having many investments, someone asked him, "Frank, how do you do all these things?" And his response was, "Well, I just do one thing at a time." Where have we heard this before? Now, I am not holding Frank Sinatra up as a Zen master, but what you ask is important. I don't mean that we should jettison our lives, but just look at our desires. Enter them deeply. For us, this is a vital koan.

— From a lecture given by Alan Senauke at the Berkeley Zen Center.

The Last Election

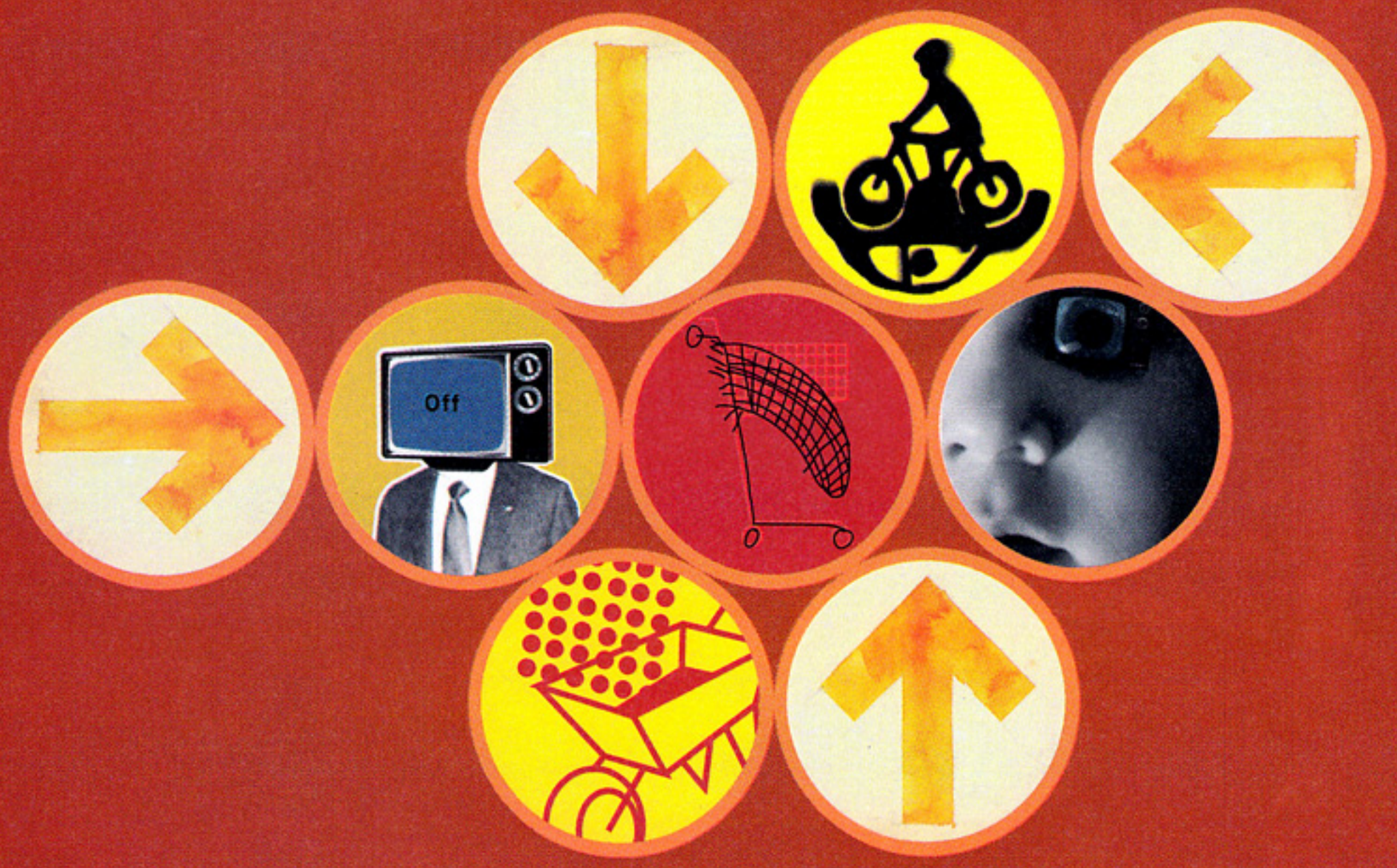
Suppose there are no returns
and the candidates, one
by one, drop off in the polls,
as the voters turn away,
each to his inner persuasion.
The frontrunners, the dark horses,
begin to look elsewhere,
and even the President admits
he has nothing new to say;
it is best to be silent now.

No more conventions, no donors,
no more hats in the ring,
no ghost-written speeches,
no promises we always knew
were never meant to be kept.

And something like the truth,
or what we knew by that name —
that for which no corporate
sponsor was ever offered —
takes hold in the public mind.

Each subdued and thoughtful
citizen closes his door, turns
off the news. He opens a book,
speaks quietly to his children,
begins to live once more.

— *John Haines*



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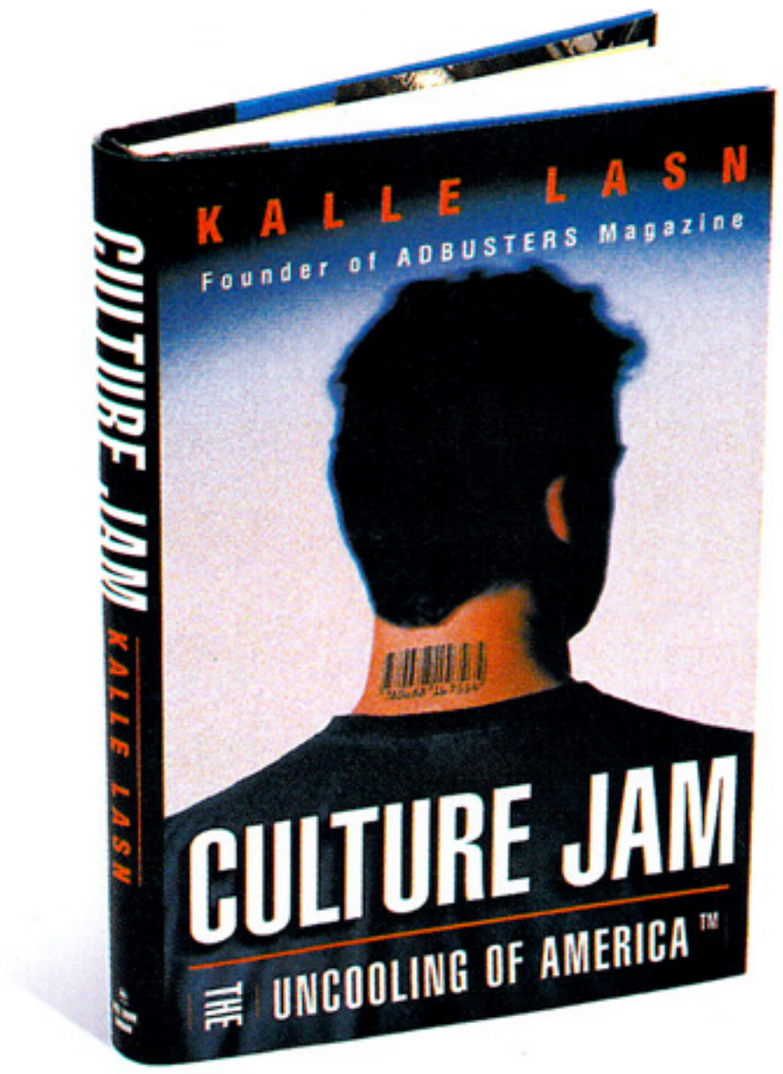

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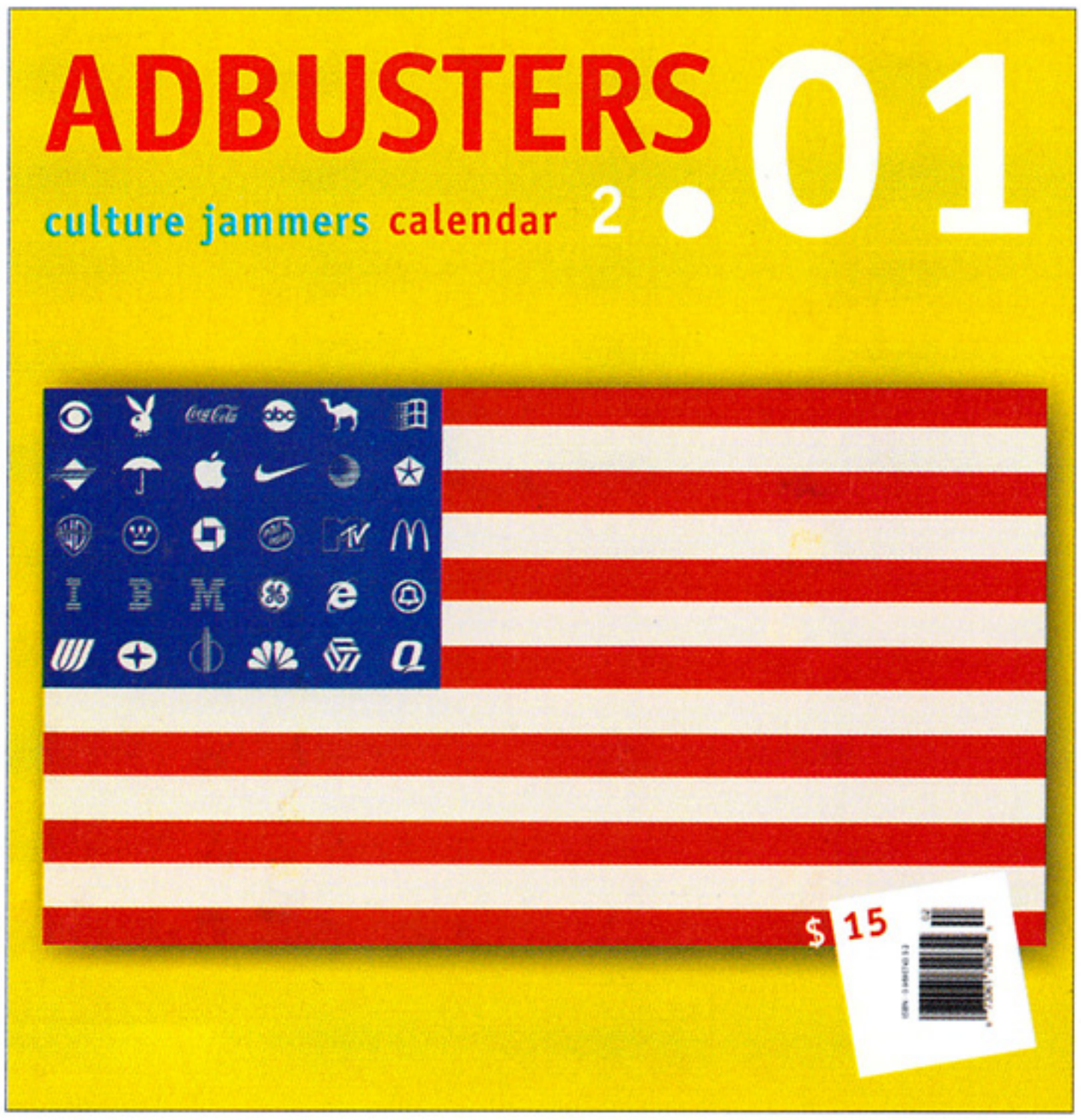

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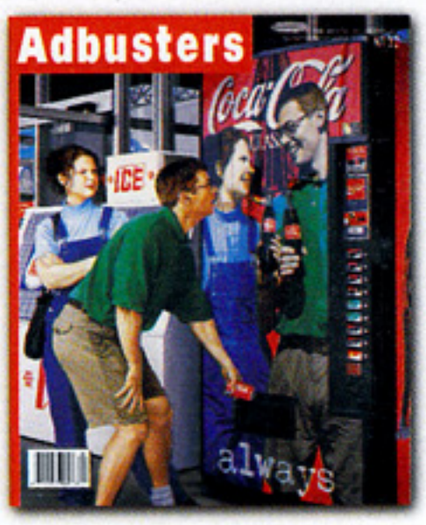

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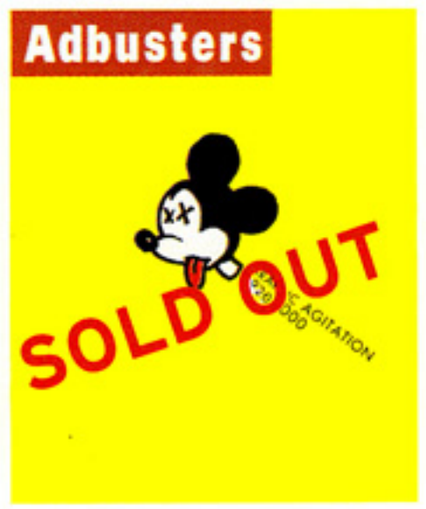

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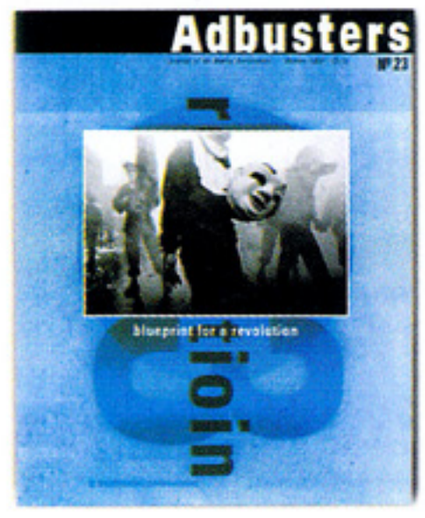

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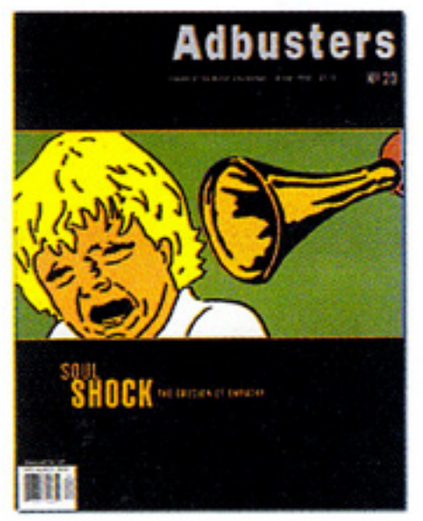

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